

43RD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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FEATURES 70+ EVENTS

The Fig Tree

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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Center is accepting, loving place to serve

By Mary Stamp

Mission Community Outreach Center (MCOC) served 2,644 children during the two pickup days of its annual shoe giveaway in August, up from 2,485 in one day last year, said Ali Norris, executive director.

She attributes the increase to listening to people in 2025 and learning that with just one day, people had to wait in line, and some left to go to work or errands without picking up shoes.

This year, families could also register online. Those who reserved shoes could pick them up on Thursday, as well as Friday, reducing the need to wait in line. Having an extra day meant more children received shoes.

Ali said word-of-mouth spreads awareness of the shoe giveaway and the need for volunteers.

As part of its 30th year, the center is temporarily closing for a two-week renovation from Sept. 25 to Oct. 22. On Oct. 11, MCOC will not be accepting donations, be open for shopping or have volunteer workers come so they can make improvements to update the space.

Each week the Mission Community Outreach Center relies on



Ali Norris finds niche for loving service at Mission Community Outreach Center.

45 volunteers to receive and sort clothing in the back room, stock it in the front room, and welcome guests at the front desk. Many come as friends and tell other friends about the opportunity.

“It’s a welcoming, accepting and loving place to serve,” Ali said. “We have few restrictions. MCOC is open to anyone in need, regardless of their zip code. Also, no identification is required to receive services.”

Families can come every 60 days for clothing, household items and hygiene products, and every 30 days for diapers.

In 1996, Mission Community Outreach Center was founded by a group from Mission Community Presbyterian Church. Soon after, MCOC became an independent nonprofit clothing bank for the neighborhood.

The center now offers clothing, hygiene items, diapers and housewares such as bedding, dishes, pans and utensils, so someone moving into housing can sleep and eat.

“Diapers are one of our biggest items—for newborns to children’s size six and adult diapers,” commented Ali.

Continued on page 4

Ephrata UMC has a solid impact through music, food, funds and love

When Ephrata United Methodist Church (UMC) was extensively damaged by fire on Palm Sunday in April 2021, its carillon was silenced. Although members began worshipping there in December 2024 and the building reconstruction was completed in November 2025, the carillon music was not restore until Spring 2026.

After the fire, community members asked the UMC to restore the carillon. It plays pre-recorded digital music on the hour from 8

a.m. to 8 p.m. for neighbors walking and working in town.

The repertoire includes familiar hymns and seasonal music.

The church started the carillon tradition nearly 50 years ago, so the equipment was too old to repair. It had to be replaced. Now the carillon is in a 22-by-20-inch box in the church office. Before the carillon was six feet tall, 2.5 feet wide and 2.5 feet deep in a storage room with an 18-by-12-inch unit in the church office. Now it is easily accessible so the

music can be changed.

“We value hearing church music during the day,” said Christy Price, a member who moved to Ephrata in 1992. “It’s comforting.”

“The community not only asked for it, but also made contributions to restore it,” said Don Dunn, the pastor, who came to Ephrata in October 2014 to serve Memorial Christian Disciples of Christ (DOC) Church.

In 2017, he began serving both the DOC and UMC churches half time. After the fire, the UMC worshiped at Memorial Christian until it closed in April 2024. Then, they worshiped at the Adventist Church until December 2024. During rebuilding, they prepared and served monthly community meals at the Bread of Life church kitchen.

Don and Christy described the fire and reconstruction.

The 2021 fire caused extensive damage throughout the building. The sanctuary was saved but flooded and had to be emptied to remove the ceiling

Continued on page 6

The Fig Tree Board offers \$7,625 to match donations

The Fig Tree Board of Directors is providing \$7,625 in matching funds to double donations up to that amount, given for the Fall Fund Drive goal of \$27,000.

“We provide The Fig Tree and Resource Directory for free, but they are not free to produce,” said editor Mary Stamp. “Along with advertisers and directory partners, we primarily rely on sponsors to make The Fig Tree possible.”

“As costs of printing, mailing and production rise, we need to keep up, because print draws more advertisers,” she explained. “We are considering the impact of increasing ad rates and other income sources, but we need to accompany such sources with increasing the number of sponsors, the number of renewals and the amount they give.”

The Fig Tree remains a unique source of news from an ecumenical, interfaith, nonprofit perspective applying peace journalism and solutions journalism that break through the normal infotainment controlled by those in power to keep people divided, fearful, anxious and suspicious.

“We foster conversation, connection and community that bring realistic hope and motivation to act based on learning the stories of others who are engaging in their neighborhoods, communities, regions, nations and the world to—as we always say—make a difference in people’s lives,” Mary said.

“Our 2026 Spring Benefit theme said it well, ‘Persist Together: Inspire Miracles’—reflecting the hard and ongoing effort required to bring unexpected results from loving people, organizing people and empowering people,” she clarified. “Every story can inform, inspire and involve people.”

For information on supporting The Fig Tree, call 535-1813, visit thefigtree.org/donate.html or mail a check to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202

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Churches propose economy of peace

Peace cannot be built on an economy that runs on war, said a theological communique released by the World Council of Churches and five partner communions that met Aug. 26 to 28 in Panama City. It asks governments to redirect military spending toward poverty and climate, and it asks churches to move their own money first.

They work within the churches' campaign for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA): for a financial system oriented toward justice rather than profit.

The communique includes what the churches see, affirm and commit to do.

• **They see a war economy** designed to extract "to produce profits for the already-powerful and losses for the already-vulnerable." Military expenditures reached \$2.887 trillion in 2025, the 11th consecutive year of growth and the highest on record, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Military activity creates up to 6 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, said Scientists for Global Responsibility and the Conflict and Environment Observatory.

Theologically, the text reports that "fossil fueled, financialized capitalism is not a neutral economic arrangement but an ethical, moral and theological problem," Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, argued. Peace cannot be secured without "a just transition away from the extractive economy"—moving off fossil fuels in a way that is fair to workers, poor people and climate-vulnerable communities.

The statement calls for awareness about use of minerals. Metals for solar panels and batteries also build missiles, drones and artificial intelligence. The digital economy is neither clean nor immaterial. Data centers take energy, water and land, including Indigenous land.

Participants see the economic instruments as weapons. Dora Arce, a Presbyterian-Reformed Church pastor in Cuba, said that since the fuel blockade, she has never seen so many hungry people in the streets of Havana.

Humberto Shikiya, of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina and the WCC Peacebuilding in Colombia Project, said, land and peace can't be separated. Redistribution is required.

Near the Panama Canal where the document was written, the canal was dug by Black Caribbean workers in a segregated labor system that colonial history tried to erase.

• **What do they affirm?** The Guna people of Panama name the Earth *Nabguana*. The communique affirms Earth's dignity and agency, "It's kin rather than commodity." Balu Wala is the balance between living beings, and of the economy of permission. No territory is entered without informed, prior consent of the Indigenous people. It wants is a just peace "built from the ground up rather than imposed from above."

• What must churches do?

Andrew Suderman of Mennonite World Conference described the churches' part. "We ought to live out and proclaim how society can be transformed into a world of justice and peace, seeing and offering glimpses of alternative ways of being.

Churches are to move their money out of the war economy and into renewable energy and community-rooted vehicles—local currencies, community banks and debt-for-social-investment swaps.

Churches are to press for a global 2 percent tax on billionaires, a 25 percent minimum corporate tax, debt cancellation and living or peace wages. Governments are to stop financing weapons and wars, regulate the trade in fossil fuels and critical minerals, and end embargoes as a weapon of war.

The document concludes that neutrality is not an option.

The consultation is part of the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2034). Two upcoming events are the UN Biodiversity Conference in Yerevan, Armenia, Oct. 19 to 30, and the UN Climate Change Conference in Antalya, Türkiye, from Nov. 9 to 20.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree receives grants to reprint directories

The Fig Tree 2026-27 Resource Directory has received a boost of \$6,700 from Rotary Club of Spokane 21, Innovia Foundation, United Healthcare, Spokane Parks Foundation, Jasmin Group, Spokane Independent Metro Business Association and Kiwanis Club of Downtown Spokane towards \$8,000 to print 2,000 additional copies to replace those handed out in the fire response.

The Fig Tree distributed 2,500 print copies to evacuees in shelters, stores, agencies, congregations and other centers in fire-affected areas and by providers

at Disaster Assistance Centers, such as at Mead and Nine Mile Falls School Districts and Shadle Park High School.

"We had the new directories available for the Spokane Complex Fires and fires on the Spokane and Colville Confederated reservations, and we updated an eight-page Short-Term Fire Response pdf we had used for the Gray and Oregon Fires in 2023," said Malcolm Haworth, Resource Directory editor.

"People impacted and agencies serving them were grateful for the print copies because they

served areas with limited or no internet access. With directories in hand, they connected people with services immediately rather than waiting for cell, power and internet restoration," he said.

The Short-Term Fire Response PDF included a check list on what survivors need to know and do after a wildfire. It has been shared widely in the region, as a free self-help tool.

Donations can be made at thefigtree.org/donate.html and the updated directory and short-term list are at thefigtree.org/directory.html.

Faith Action Network celebrates its 15 years

Faith Action Network (FAN) Annual Dinner Fundraiser, "15 Years: Many Faiths Fighting for Justice," will be held at 5 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 8, at Gonzaga's Hemmingson Center.

This year, FAN is holding separate events in Seattle and Spokane. On Nov. 8, FAN board and staff, fellow FAN members, faith communities and individuals of faith and conscience will celebrate the collective power of multifait voices rooted in Spokane with an all-local program.

Spokane supporters will join in celebrating 15 years of multi-faith advocacy and public action, a milestone, and invest in FAN's mission and vision of a strong multifait voice across the state.

In 2011, the Washington Association of Churches and Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington merged to form the Faith Action Network as a partnership for the common good. Three members of each organization became members of the FAN governing board, which

also included one member each from the Jewish, African American and Hispanic communities. A 30-member advisory council included diverse faiths.

FAN is a statewide, multi-faith partnership striving for just, compassionate sustainable communities through courageous advocacy and public action.

The Seattle fundraising dinner is Monday, Oct. 18, in Campion Ballroom at Seattle University.

For information, visit fanwa.ejoinme.org/15YearsSpokane.

Spokane Alliance builds consensus to learn

When the Spokane Alliance met Sept. 15 for their Community Assembly at Covenant United Methodist Church, there was time for reflection about the fires that affected the area.

There was consensus that there is more to learn about what the fires revealed about the community. The conversation then was a first step. The next step

invited participants to return to congregations, unions and member organizations to learn about their experiences and what they want for Spokane in the future.

People shared about the unequal impact of the fires on manufactured home residents, international students, unhoused neighbors and immigrants.

Participants responded to sev-

eral questions: 1) What did they see, read or hear about the fires that affected them the most? 2) How do they see disaster differently now? 3) What should the Spokane Alliance pay attention to as an institution?"

They drew responses both for the alliance and each institution.

For information, visit spokanecalliance.org

Church builds temple in Coeur d'Alene

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Temple on Saturday, Aug. 29, with Elder Hutch Fale, of the U.S. West Area Presidency, presiding.

Idaho is home to more than 480,000 Latter-day Saints who meet in more than 1,300 congregations. There are six temples in Idaho, two under construction

and three announced. Idaho has three missions.

Latter-day Saints consider temples the "house of the Lord" and the most sacred places of worship. Temples differ from meeting houses, also called chapels that are open for anyone to attend

Sunday worship services and other weekday activities. Temples are where members participate in sacred ceremonies, such as marriages and proxy baptisms.

For information, call 270-4950 or email jennifer.hicks509@yahoo.com.

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People Who Care Luncheon will be on Oct. 1

The program for Transitions' People Who Care Luncheon at 12 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 1, in The Davenport Grand, 333 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. emphasizes that "each individual is a work in progress—worthy of dignity and the opportunity to grow toward wholeness," said Sara Lickfold, executive director of Transitions.

Attendees will hear about journeys of women working toward stability, financial independence, emotional healing and renewed hope, and be invited to donate.

“When one woman grows toward wholeness, the impact extends into her families, workplaces and the community. Growth is possible. Together, we can make it sustainable,” Sara said.

For information, call 328-6702 or visit transitions.givecloud.co/people-who-care-2026-mni91txnc.

FAN plans its Autumn Regional Meeting

The Faith Action Network (FAN) Spokane Area Autumn Regional Meeting from 2 to 4 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 7, at Spokane Friends, 1612 W. Dalke, is a time for local members and advocates to meet other justice-focused people of faith and conscience.

They will discuss 1) federal attempts to limit voting and how faith communities can help by encouraging early voting and providing reliable information, 2) state ballot initiatives and 3) priorities for Eastern Washington.

For information, visit fanwa.ourpowerbase.net/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=339.

Cathedral of St. John hosts two exhibits

St John's Cathedral is hosting the exhibit, "Unto the Ends of the Earth, The Legacy of the Great Commission in the Inland Northwest," from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursdays to Saturdays until Nov. 14, or by appointment at 127 E. 12th.

It includes artwork, photography, historic church furnishings, folk art, artifacts and new historical research, inviting visitors to consider how Christianity took root and spread across the world to the Inland Northwest, and to examine the complicated history that accompanied that expansion.

From 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturdays, Oct. 10 and Nov. 7, at St. John's, the Garry Bible Collection will be available to view, on loan from the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. The collection includes research on five historic books Spokane tribal member Chief Garry owned.

For information, visit stjohns-cathedral.org.

Fall Folk Festival includes music, dance, story

On Nov. 14 and 15, the 31st Spokane Fall Folk Festival will fill six stages at Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene St., with musicians, dancers, storytellers and kids' crafts. Performances are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday. The free festival, the premier multicultural performance event in the Inland Northwest, was voted third place in the Inlander Best Arts and Cultural Event Contest in 2026.

At the first Fall Folk Festival in 1996, about 350 people listened to 12 performing groups at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Now more than 100 groups perform for 6,000 attendees. The Spokane Folklore Society, which sponsors the festival, was founded in 1977 to promote cultural and folk art.

For information, call 828-3683 or email director@spokane-folkfestival.org or visit spokane-folkfestival.org.

Human rights awards will be presented

The 2026 Eva Lassman “Take Action Against Hate” awards will be presented at the Human Rights Awards Banquet, sponsored by Human Rights Spokane, on Thursday, Nov. 12, to Nighat Dad, a Pakistani lawyer who founded Digital Rights Foundation, and to the nonprofit organization, Eradicate Hate.

“Take Action Against Hate” awards, sponsored by Gonzaga University Center for the Study of Hate, are presented to an individual and an organization that challenge hate and change their communities, following the footsteps of Holocaust survivor and anti-hate advocate Eva Lassman.

“The awards committee considers how nominees engage in action and awareness-building,” said Gonzaga’s Aaron Danowski, chair. **“We focus on efforts that demonstrate impact.”**

Night Dad was born in Karachi and moved to Lahore, where she earned bachelor's and law degrees at the University of the Punjab. As a young lawyer, she represented herself in divorce court, securing her freedom and the custody of her infant son.

That experience shaped her practice in criminal and family law, and her work with women facing abuse and surveillance.

In 2012, she founded the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF), a non-governmental organization (NGO) to provide “safe online spaces” for women in Pakistan, South Asia and beyond. DRF counters cyber harassment, promotes data protection and achieves online freedom of expression for women and other gender minorities by preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

In 2016, it launched the region's first helpline for online violence, the Digital Security Helpline. It has handled more than 23,000 cases, providing free legal advice, digital secu-

rity support and psychological counseling.

Nihat was appointed to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence and to Meta's Oversight Board, which reviews the company's content moderation and issues binding rulings and policy recommendations.

Nighat has shifted the conversation from blaming women to demanding that platforms and institutions have more responsible content.

The second awardee, Eradicate Hate—founded after the October 2018 massacre at Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life Synagogue, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history—believes everyone can play a role in reducing hate-fueled violence.

It organizes the annual Eradicate Hate Global Summit, an international, multidisciplinary conference to prevent hate-fueled violence.

Since its launch, more than 3,500 participants have gathered from around the world—survivors, researchers, educators, policymakers and profession-

als—to partner and develop practical solutions to keep communities safe.

Eradicate Hate has also organized working groups, the Prevention Practitioners Network and educational initiatives that have equipped thousands of people with skills to spot domestic abuse and confront and prevent hate-fueled violence.

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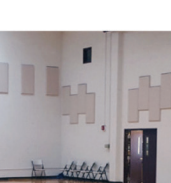


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Center welcomes guests in times of need

Continued from page 1
In 2025, Mission Community Outreach Center gave out 240,000 articles of clothing, 15,000 hygiene products and 230,000 individual diapers, serving 23,395 individuals.

Community members donate gently used clothing. The center buys diapers and hygiene items, with diapers supplemented by Partners Inland Northwest.

“We buy most diapers to keep up with demand,” said Ali.

They also buy most hygiene items, so they keep stocked up. Sometimes churches and community groups do collections.

One third of funds is from individual donors, another third is from churches, and the final third is from community groups, including grants from Rotary and Kiwanis for shoes.

“We accept no city, state or federal funding, which frees us from the ups and downs of such funds,” Ali explained. “It also frees us from having to set up barriers, beyond how much and how often guests can receive items.”

Families can choose three tops, three bottoms, two socks, two underwear, one pair of shoes and one coat per person per household. Parents do not need to bring everyone with them to shop.

“I love that we ask few questions. We are here to serve people without barriers. By not asking why they need help, we offer a welcoming, loving environment for those in need,” said Ali.

The center runs like a store. Guests feel like they are shopping, choosing from quality, clean items. Volunteers go through all clothing to assure its quality.

Ali, whose mother is a social worker, started working as part-time office administrator at MCOC after earning her master’s degree in public health from Eastern Washington University in 2017.

“I fell in love with the work,” she said, “because we serve anyone who needs us without asking people to jump through hoops. We are here to love them wherever they are in life.”

“Rather than offering a food bank or rental help, we hope that providing essential items gives families extra funds to help pay for rent or food,” she added.

Serving the same families multiple times through the year, volunteers offer companionship from the time families come new to the area, often as immigrants,

to when they are established and return to give clothing for others.

One family gave diapers, because of how important diapers were for them. Some also come back and volunteer.

“People are grateful because they know we are here as long as they need help,” Ali commented. “I’ve learned in this work the best thing we can do is to listen to the people we serve and learn from their experiences.”

“Both from those we serve and those who donate, I have gained a positive perspective on people’s kindness. Donors want to help people in whatever capacity they can,” she added.

In addition to Ali, there is a part-time operations manager, Lauren Martin, but the rest who work Monday through Friday and sometimes on weekends are volunteers. In 2025, volunteers put in more than 6,000 hours.

There are three days of shopping—1 to 4 p.m., Mondays and Thursdays, and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wednesdays.

Volunteers—most of whom are of retirement age because the center is open during the day—come from the community and support churches, which also provide funds for items.

Church, youth and Bible study groups, businesses, nonprofits and volunteers are all an important part of the MCOC community, Ali said.

Ali listed the support churches: Beautiful Savior, Bethlehem, Holy Cross, Hope, Redeemer, Prince of Peace and St. Luke Lutheran; Hamblen Park, Manito, Millwood Community and First Presbyterian; Spokane Valley and Manito United Methodist; Summit South Hill and U-District, St. Aloysius Catholic, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, Calvary Chapel, Life Center and Cheney Nazarene churches.

“As a child, I saw my mother doing social work and my whole life, I have seen both parents involved in the community,” Ali said. “I have learned that being part of the village is important. I can’t imagine not being part of the nonprofit world.”

When families have access to quality used clothing, it means that the kids feel good when they go back to school, and the adults have confidence when they are

seeking a job.

“We are here to support people when they go through tough times,” said Ali, who earned a bachelor’s degree in international studies and political science in 2013 at the University of Idaho.

After college, Ali was an intern for U.S. Senator Patty Murray in Washington, D.C., and then served a year with AmeriCorps, helping Cheney Parks and Recreation with after-school programs and sports.

While she valued her internship in D.C., she decided she wanted to serve the community in non-political ways. So, she did her master’s degree in public health because of its impact.

Ali, a member of Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, began attending there when she was about two years old. For four years, her family lived in Germany when her father did civilian work at Ramstein Air Force Base.

“Living abroad gave my sister and me a chance to see the world in a different way than we would have if we had just stayed here,” she noted.

Growing up in Spokane Valley UMC, she participated in mission and service teams, and volunteered with nonprofits, which is how she first connected with Mission Community Outreach Center.

“Our church seeks to transform the world by serving people where they are with love and without judgment,” she said. “It’s second nature to accept and love people, to be Christlike in the community.”

Ali is aware that Mission Community Outreach Center reached the milestone of its 30th year because of the support of churches and community.

For information, call 536-1084 or email mcoc@mcoc.org.

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Nonprofits facilitate forum discussion on concerns about data centers

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Putting a data center in the Spokane area is causing controversy, so the Spokane City Council issued a year moratorium on accepting, processing, reviewing or approving building permits for new computer data centers, and the Spokane County Commissioners passed a similar ordinance but for only a four-month moratorium that ends on Dec. 15.

During the moratoriums, the city and county will develop ordinances for permanent regulations rather than an indefinite freeze.

Six nonprofit advocacy groups wanting to learn what people think about having data centers held “The People’s Public Forum on Data Centers” on Sept. 10 at the Airway Heights Hilton. The groups are 350 Spokane, the Spokane Riverkeeper, The Lands Council, Asians for Collective Liberation, the West Plains Water Coalition and Spokane Environmental Policy Coalition.

At the forum, concerned people of many ages crowded the room to learn about data centers planned for Spokane County. They shared concerns and information and explored ways to work together to be heard.

Representatives from three of the sponsors spoke. They were John Hancock of the West Plains Water Coalition, Amanda Parrish of The Lands Council and Kara Odegard, chair of the Environmental Policy Coalition and former head of Spokane’s Sustainability Initiative program.

John’s talk explained West Plains area water concerns, warning that because PFAS are used for cooling data centers, it would risk further contamination of West Plains water.

Kara said her coalition represents people concerned about environmental quality. They are providing input to Spokane City Council and Spokane County Commission deliberations.

Concerned that there has been limited public discussion, Amanda said the purpose of the evening was to hear from those who came—what do they see, what do they know and what do they want to happen.

Attendees shared comments.

Many were concerned that the county moratorium expires Dec. 15, and there is little certainty about long-term requirements limiting the impact of data centers on the air, water, environment and energy use. How this affects the availability and cost of clean water and electricity for current users is uncertain.

Many called for extending the moratorium at least a year.

Several highlighted the lack of transparency about what is being planned and promoted.

Spokane 350-member David Camp is concerned that County Commissioner Al French had been in private conversation with a company interested in developing data centers. According to David, the company only exists on paper and has never built a data center. Its director claims he has a data center customer but will not tell who it is.

Other speakers were concerned about hazards for human and animal health and wanted to know whether such issues would be considered in ordinances.

Terry Horne, a West Plains resident, was concerned about the effect of the very long infrasound waves generated by data centers. While humans cannot hear these frequencies, extremely high-pressure levels can be felt as physical vibrations or can cause discomfort like dizziness and pressure in the ear.

Joseph Ghodsee, water commissioner for the East Spokane Water District 1, echoed concern that data centers contaminate the air and water with PFAS—“forever chemicals.” PFAS are used to keep servers cool and for fire suppression. In the environment, they last forever.

According to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI), direct PFAS pollution from data centers is hard to measure and likely limited, because cooling systems generally operate as closed loops.

However, some watchdog groups, such as Food and Water Watch, argue leaks are more common than thought, the industry admits that small leaks are common and prolonged exposure to the fluids degrades the equipment itself.

Experts see data center expansion, especially for artificial intelligence (AI), as increasing PFAS contamination through fire suppression, cooling fluids and chip manufacturing. Without federal or state rules requiring discharge testing, PFAS levels from data centers are unclear.

Another speaker referred to problems that could occur in other sectors if data center construction was pushed through:

“The data center push nationally ‘is wreaking havoc in the housing sector.’ It puts pressure on labor and materials. Prioritizing constructing data centers could mean delays in rebuilding homes destroyed by the recent wildfires.”

Still another person was concerned about the difficulty of reversing course once an ordinance permits a project and it becomes “vested,” adding, “It is often very hard to force a company to tear a facility down once it is built.”

Others wondered why there is need for more data centers when so many already exist.

One claimed there is no good definition of what a data center is.

The AI search online said that data centers are physical facilities or buildings housing networked computer servers, data storage systems and networking equipment that store, processes and distribute large amounts of data. They are the internet’s backbone, powering everything from cloud computing and streaming services to online banking, AI information and mobile apps. Some centers are small and local, but hyperscale, cloud campuses are of greatest concern: Massive campuses are run by tech giants, like Amazon Web Services or Microsoft.

According to the American Edge Project, a pro-tech advocacy group and the Technology Councils of North America, Washington has 115 to 134 data centers—among the top 10 states for data center infrastructure.

Not all are massive, enterprise-grade facilities, but an inventory by the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) identified 29 major data centers, with at least 10 more planned.

Larger facilities are primarily in Central and Eastern Washington—Quincy, Moses Lake and East Wenatchee—because of cheap, renewable hydro-energy from the Columbia River, cold winters that provide natural cooling and rural tax exemptions.

Companies in the Quincy area include Microsoft, Sabey, Vantage Centers, H5 Data Centers and Yahoo. Keel Infrastructure—formerly Bitfarms that operates the one in Moses Lake. Sabey,

Microsoft, Bitdeer, T-Mobile and BlackRock have campuses in the East Wenatchee area.

At the forum, one speaker cited a letter from Patty Martin, the mayor of Quincy from 1993 to 1997 and a strong critic of the data industry. She advocated against the rapid expansion of facilities in Quincy since they came.

While current city officials say data centers heavily funded municipal infrastructure—roads, a new hospital and a state-of-the-art high school—Patty said that perspective was shortsighted.

Her core criticisms focus on long-term impacts, noting the city needs to look beyond immediate economic windfalls and focus on its resource limits, like changing mountain snowpacks, population growth and the shift to electric vehicles as competing pressures on the regional power grid.

She believes Quincy’s transformation from a farming town to an industrialized outpost fundamentally changed its visual and social character.

In an August interview with Lizz Giordano of Cascade PBS, Patty said, “Quincy had been a food processing town. Now it’s controlled by people from large corporations who aren’t pres-

ent. Driving into town, all one see are stacks and stacks—like something out of ‘The Lorax’.”

She also fights the expansion of backup diesel generators used regularly to ensure 100 percent server uptime. She urges the state to regulate potential health hazards from their diesel emissions.

The forum ended with organizers urging people to attend upcoming meetings to voice their opinions and push to extend the moratorium. They provided a list of September and October meetings of the County Commissioners, the City Council and Planning Commission on the Data Center Draft Ordinance.

For information, visit landscouncil.org/spokane-data-centers.

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October 2026

Ephrata pastor closes one church and rebuilds another after fire

Continued from page 1
and walls containing asbestos. Pews were stored in the Memorial Christian basement to be cleaned and refinished. Pew cushions were thrown away, along with anything porous, fabric, wood or plastic because of smoke damage. The sound system had to be replaced.

The fire gutted much of the Sunday school building. All but two classrooms at one end were stripped to the studs.

Christy, as the reconstruction project manager, was liaison between the trustees, contractors and insurance adjusters. She was an educator and then director with Washington State University's Grant County Extension. A United Methodist all her life, she is active in the church.

"I help keep things going, teaching Sunday school, singing in the choir and serving as treasurer," said Christy, who also coordinates the church's community dinner with her husband, Camille.

While dealing with the UMC reconstruction, Don was helping Memorial Christian close. The DOC building was sold in 2025.

"We had a memorable service to close the DOC, knowing the ministry would continue. We spent months deciding where to make contributions from the sale and investments. Funds went to various ministries and foundations in Ephrata and at the regional and national DOC.

"It felt like a resurrection moment to see gifts of that church's stewardship continue to serve the purposes of God's ministry through other avenues of mission," he said.

Don then reflected on his journey in ministry.

Until seventh grade, he lived in the Seattle area, attending an American Baptist Church. After his family moved to Southern California in 1960, they attended a fundamentalist Bible church.

He met Bobbi in high school. They married in 1966 after he went a year to a Bible college in Tennessee. From 1973 to 1983, he worked in aviation refueling at Denver's airport, finishing a degree in education and missions in 1976 at Denver Baptist Bible College. He wanted to continue seminary studies. After some struggle, he became open to other denominations. From 1985 to 1988, he completed a master of divinity degree at Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

"I found grace and affirmation as my faith grew through conversations, reading, learning, praying and discovering theologian Walter Brueggemann's emphasis on hospitality, generosity



Bobbi and Don Dunn bring awareness of world.

and forgiveness," said Don.

During seminary, he was an associate minister at South Broadway Christian Church Disciples of Christ (DOC) in Denver for three years.

Ephrata UMC is Don's 12th church. He ministered at DOC churches in Colorado, Nebraska, Montana, Texas, Missouri, Idaho and Oregon, and in Prosser and Desert Air (Presbyterian), Wash., before coming to Ephrata to serve Memorial Christian DOC.

Sunday attendance now at the UMC averages 20 with different people each week. Some are homebound. Members give and help in many ways.

"Many members and leaders have died or moved away to be cared for by their children," he said.

"As I look to the future, faithfulness is important. We need to see moments of joy in a church's life through changes and challenges we face," he said.

Along with worship, Don leads a Bible study and a book reading group. With several pianists and a guitarist, the church has strong music for worship.

For 21 years, the UMC has provided a community dinner for about 50 people monthly before COVID. Then they doubled the number of meals they made and delivered. Now the dinner serves 120 meals once a month including to homebound and homeless people.

The church assists people in need, helping with electric and water bills, and providing food and lodging for those coming through town.

Since 2025, the church has shared its building with the Hispanic Apostolic Assembly, which has about 25 attending. Because they worship Thursday evenings, as well as Sundays, many join the

community meals served in the church on Thursdays.

"There is a growing Hispanic population in Ephrata," noted Christy. "When our children were in school in the 1990s, there were a few Hispanic kids in a class, and now 46 percent of the children are Hispanic. Their families work on farms and for the county, schools and hospital."

"Influenced by Brueggeman, I see immigrants from a perspective of Christian hospitality. I see less fortunate people from a perspective of generously sharing resources," he said. "Forgiveness is hard for Christians to practice because we live a lifetime adjusting to a God who is above all gracious."

Don has also added insights to his preaching from two-week visits to Palestine and Israel. In October 2022, he joined 20 others on a bus tour to sacred sites. In May 2025, Bobbi joined him, traveling in a small van with five others, meeting Palestinians and learning of their struggles to navigate life amid government restrictions.

The wife and son of a Palestinian political prisoner said he studies from high school to a doctoral degree while in prison, where he teaches other prisoners.

In an Arab community of Israel, they met Father Elias Chacour, who runs the Ibillin School for Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim and Christian children.

They also visited the Tent of Nations, a farm belonging to a Palestinian Christian family whose ancestors have been there since the Ottoman Empire.

"I continue to pray for the people and keep informed on what happens and how difficult life is for Palestinians," Don said. "Even though I am sometimes crying inside, it's refreshing to realize there is more to our faith than our one little locale," he said.

He continues to find ways to serve the people of Ephrata, a town of 9,000 surrounded by many farms, where families for generations have tended orchards and grown wheat, hay, corn, potatoes, onions and vegetable seeds.

In town, people work for the Public Utility District, jail, courthouse, county offices, railroad, schools and the hospital that includes assisted living, a nursing home, a rehabilitation center and a clinic. Many shop 20 miles away in Moses Lake.

Ephrata is growing with about 200 homes built since Don and Bobbi came.

There are 20 churches—including Adventist, Apostolic Assembly, Assembly of God, Baptist, Catholic, Community, Episcopal, Foursquare, Jeho-

vah's Witness, Latter-day Saints, Lutheran (two), Nazarene, Non-Denominational (three), Presbyterian, Reformed Christian and United Methodist.

"Previously, if someone changed churches, the pastors knew, because they got along," said Don. "About 20 years ago, Ephrata had a ministerial association, and pastors were respected for cooperative leadership until it disbanded after a few pastors wanted to establish a doctrinal standard for it.

"While conversation and co-operation narrowed, our church is inclusive to people regardless of race, gender, gender identity or voting record," said Don, adding that other congregations in Ephrata also "share a message of encompassing God's love for the world, proclaiming peace and justice, countering racism and violence and showing compassion for all God's children."

For information, call 754-4664 or email pastor@umcephrata.org.

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Disaster in Nepal stirs caring response through Conscious Connections

While Nepal is far away, many Spokane people have personal connections there.

At a Sept. 3 fundraiser in the Community Building foyer, about 50 supporters of fair trade and Conscious Connections Foundation (CCF) heard updates on Nepal after the glacial flooding Aug. 26 from Tibet through the Trishuli River watershed.

While CCF provides access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities in Nepal, it has responded to disasters in the past, providing aid after the 2015 earthquake and supplies during COVID. Their sister non-profit, Conscious Connections Nepal (CCN), is on the ground in Nepal, working with people affected by the disaster.

In Spokane, thousands of miles from his home in Nepal, Satish Shrestha, a volunteer with CCF, said at the presentation and in a blog post that he is heartened to realize so many people here care about the devastation there.

Satish, who now leads a data and applications team serving North American universities, said his physics, business and leadership degrees taught him about the intersection of technology and humanity. In Spokane, he also works with CCF to help people in the mountains of Nepal.

“Pasang Tamang, a childhood friend, grew up in Thuman, a village that neighbors Syabru Besi and Timure, two of the devastated areas. While most of her family is now in Kathmandu or abroad, many relatives still live in the region. Her family stopped counting how many people they’ve lost. Every day brings news of someone else. The grief and stress are constant and compounding,” he said. “Her focus is to help people survive. She works in public health with nonprofits in her village.”

She received a doctoral degree in public health from the University of Huddersfield the United Kingdom to help women and reduce the infant mortality rate.

For her, as for him, education was the way out of poverty.

“As I watched villages being swept away, I thought about the climate change that led to



Satish Shrestha speaks.

Nepal’s glaciers melting,” he said. “Nepali people suffer not because of their actions. They are responsible for one-tenth of one percent of greenhouse gases, yet they are the ones who suffer.

When he asked Pasang what he could do, she said to look past the next few weeks. The greater need is after people survive and as they carry the stress, trauma and burden of rebuilding.

“I’m grateful that in Spokane so many people care about Nepal, where CCF and Ganesh Himal have been helping for more than 40 years,” he said.

CCF’s work is personal for him, as he calls people to help educate children who lost parents.

“In Nepal, education is the clearest route to stability and opportunity. Money and fundraising matter. We need to mobilize it for lasting impact, not just immediate relief,” Satish said.

Denise Attwood, CCF board chair, said on Sept. 3 that the CCF, which focuses on removing barriers to women, grew out of Ganesh Himal Trading Co. She founded the fair-trade wholesale business in 1985 with her husband, Ric, to work with Nepali artisans and sell their goods.

“Spokane is an amazing community in how people support fair trade, and CCF,” she said.

Through Ganesh Himal and CCF, they have used their long-term relationships to set up channels of relief with Nepali women.

“These women are smart, they just need resources and to be heard,” Denise added. “As people share ideas with us, we help them realize them, providing the tools they need to help each other.”

This disaster is no different.

On the day of the flood, women in Nuwakot, who had lost everything, requested menstrual hygiene supplies, and CCF put 245 kits on a truck. CCF has since had requests for 500 more kits for women displaced and now housed in Kathmandu, she reported. Kits are being provided.

More relief is offered through the connection with Pasang. At her communities’ request, CCF is purchasing 150 NLP gas-filled cylinders for villagers cut off from roads by the floods.

“CCF also thinks of the long-term needs. Given our work with educating girls, villagers have told us that many children were orphaned and will need support to continue their education,” Denise said. “To do this, we have to ensure there are sufficient funds so the children impacted can stay in school for multiple years. If we are asked to do this, we are committed to supporting them through their education, because these children need stability.”

CCF is already providing disaster preparedness and first aid training, as part of long-term disaster relief. Remote communities where CCF has done menstrual hygiene trainings since 2017 have asked CCF to provide emergency first aid and climate disaster preparation, because they know more disasters are in their future.

In 2025, CCF created a program to provide women in remote areas with resources to help them manage effects of climate change.

“Perhaps we can work with organizations like the GU Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment on global warming to mitigate what is happening in Nepal’s mountains, rivers and homes. CCF programs ask if the work will have an impact 20 years in the future,” she said.

“The hard work comes after

aid groups go and world the turns to the next disaster. So, we are assessing strengths and connections CCF/CCN have and are talking with those impacted to learn how we can provide support and preventive measures to communities,” said Denise.

Brian Henning, director of the Gonzaga Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment, also spoke Sept. 3, noting that disasters such as the one in Nepal are not going away. They are a partial result of global warming.

“Climate change impacts those who have contributed the least to global warming,” he said, pointing out the importance of women in Nepal educating their communities and building strategies for survival.

Denise said donations at the evening event and later, plus 10 percent of Kizuri sales raised \$20,000 for CCF’s disaster relief and long-term recovery in Nepal.

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Spoken River invites stories to speak for river

Spoken River is the Spokane Riverkeeper’s annual community celebration and fundraiser, a night centered on storytelling, reflection and the shared work of protecting the Spokane River. Each year, Spokane Riverkeeper invites the community to gather around the river’s stories, history, beauty and responsibilities of caring for it. They invite writers, poets and artists to contribute short work—up to 750 words—to celebrate the Spokane River and communities it sustains. This year’s theme, “We Are Listening,” is rooted in the river’s

language: “Some days it murmurs over stones. In some seasons, it roars. In others, it drifts quietly beneath cottonwood shade. Whatever its voice, the river settles into us,” said Katie Thompson, managing director. “We especially welcome perspectives from Indigenous people, youth and underrepresented voices whose relationships with the river are essential,” she invited. Selected contributors receive two tickets and will share their work live on Thursday, Nov. 12. Submissions are due Oct. 7. October events include the “Witches and Warlocks BYO-

Boat Paddle” for folks dressing in witchy attire to share spooky stories about toxics, the local ecosystem and river history from 1 to 4 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 3, at the SIERR Building Launch, 820 E. Spokane Falls Blvd. The Fall 2026 Spokane River Roll from 1 to 4 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 10, at the Harvard Road Trailhead in Liberty Lake is an educational 10-mile roll along the river by bike, roller skates, scooter or other human-powered wheels with Spokane Riverkeeper and 350 Spokane. For information, call 464-7614 or visit spokaneriverkeeper.org.

Rotary gives fire relief funds

After the Spokane Complex Fires, Downtown Spokane Rotary 21 established a Fire Disaster Relief Taskforce/Spokane County Wildfire Fund in the nonprofit Rotary Community Service Inc. At a club and district level, they are focusing on housing, food security, debris removal, replanting trees and vocational support for kids in school.

Julie Kelsey, district coordinator for the Disaster Assistance Committee, said that “when the fires happened in Medical Lake and Elk, we responded, partnering with Disaster Aid USA, a nonprofit Rotary project started in Maryland in response to hurricanes. In the West, it responds primarily to fires.”

“Some members of local Rotary Clubs in Coeur d’Alene, Sandpoint, Colville and as far as San Diego and Chicago Disaster Aid USA are coming with friends and colleagues,” she said.

Rotary volunteers go to properties after the EPA has done asbestos testing and passed homes for clean-up. They help sort through debris, clear out metal and cut down smaller trees to prepare for excavation and rebuilding. Utilities and arborists clear out big trees. Rotary volunteers remove metal—appliances, filing cabinets and water heaters—from homes.

“Other clubs help. Our district received \$100,000. Our local club received more than \$30,000 from two Rotary Clubs in California, three in Washington and our sister city in Japan,” Julie said.

Rotary 21 has quickly granted funds, including \$3,000 to The Fig Tree to reprint 2,000 copies of the 2026-27 Resource Directory after The Fig Tree distributed 2,500 copies to fire assistance efforts, shelters and organizations in affected areas.

It awarded a \$3,000 grant to Spokane Helpers Network for

providing food to families. “Because Rotary is global, the local club shares resources with agencies we know,” Julie said. “Our district is Eastern Washington to Walla Walla, North Idaho and British Columbia, so when the fires hit Stephens, Ferry and Spokane counties, there was an outpouring of support.” For information, call 435-1511 or visit rotaryspokane.com.

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Synod funds solar electrified cooking system at school in Tanzania

The Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has pledged to provide the funding for a new solar electrified cooking system at the Tumaini Lutheran Seminary, a secondary school in Malinyi, Tanzania, overseen by the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese.

More than 250 students and staff are fed from this kitchen three times daily when school is in session, and the solar kitchen will make a difference in the health of the students.

The solar kitchen will eliminate the harmful emissions produced by the existing wood-burning kitchen, including carbon monoxide and formaldehyde. The solar kitchen contractor and engineer have been working on the installation and soon cooks at the school will be using the new kitchen, said Heidi Cryer, who works with the companion synod.



Work team unloads solar panels to install them at Tumaini.

The total cost of the solar kitchen is \$77,000, which includes the equipment and installation, and refurbishing the existing cooking space in the dining/assembly hall—an earlier project of the synod—and travel costs for a local manager.

“A nonprofit in Tanzania has

purchased carbon credits, and this solar project received several thousand dollars,” said Heidi.

About \$12,000 has been committed to the project by NWIM Synod, congregations and individuals in the synod.

“We now have a donation to match donations up to \$20,000

made from mid-September to mid-November,” Heidi added.

“We planned to pay the full amount over seven years, but we expect to have all the funds by early 2027 and pay it off early.

“It’s an exciting project and timely as the government of Tanzania expects organizations that feed more than 100 people to install solar for cooking, so the government can curb the deforestation that results from cooking with wood,” Heidi explained. “In

addition, the health of the cooks and all members at Tumaini is harmed by the smoke of cooking with wood. There is also a great savings from using the readily available free resource of solar.”

Twelve members of the NWIM Synod went to Tanzania in June. The next companion synod visit to Tanzania will be Oct. 26 to Nov. 11, 2027.

For information, visit nwim-synod.org/tanzania-companion-synod-ukd.

Climate institute stabilizes after fund cuts

For the Gonzaga Institute of Climate, Environment and Water, the 2025 to 2026 academic year was a year of trial and transition, as well as stabilization and celebration—of its fifth anniversary.

In addition to the federal government ending its \$19.9 million grant to advance community resilience in Spokane, there were

cuts at the state level, forcing the institute to eliminate three full-time positions. However, the combination of cost cutting, new grants and generous supporters has helped stabilize the center to function with fewer staff even as its work has grown.

“We continue to host an annual lecture series for people across the globe, as we reach hundreds of young people with climate education and prepare dozens of students for careers in climate research, organizing and education,” said Brian Henning, founder and director.

The Climate Institute is the Inland Northwest’s leader in community-engaged climate research. In addition, it is creating

a regional network of resilience hubs and developing the region’s first in-depth resilience plans.

“We are also collaborating with Gonzaga Law School’s new Environmental and Climate Law Clinic to support new laws that bring the systemic change we need,” said Brian.

The institute builds capacity to address challenges humanity faces, knowing that if the work is successful, it will continue across generations.

“We are grateful to lay the cornerstones that will serve as the foundation of this multi-generational endeavor,” said Brian.

For information, call 313-4665 or visit gonzaga.edu/climate-institute.

Extreme Team improves kitchen

KXLY Extreme Team has renovated the Meals on Wheels of Greater Spokane County (MOWGSC) kitchen, creating a larger, more efficient space for it to provide nutritious meals and meaningful connections to older adults in the county.

“I loved this one, I didn’t know much about it, but I saw it’s potential to help,” said Mark Peterson, KXLY, of the project.

MOWGSC, which provides about 230,000 meals each year to more than 1,000 individuals partners with Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW) in serving older adults, adults with disabilities and their families to support independence, health, safety and quality of life.

Lynn Kimball, executive director of ALTCEW, said the renovation shows what can happen when the community comes together around a shared goal to help people as they age or navigate disability with their long-term care needs.”

For information, visit mowgsc.org.

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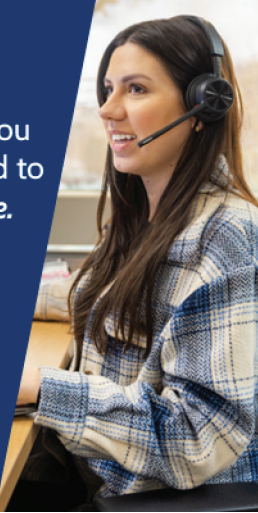




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Artist explores her love of nature as she creates art on Instagram posts

In August, we saw natural habitat for wildlife turn into ash as wildfires raged through North Central Washington, the Cascades, near the Yakama Reservation, within the Colville Confederated Reservation, near the Spokane Reservation, and through northern Spokane areas.

Soon after that we watched on media as glaciers melted in Tibet and unleashed landslides and floods that swept through villages in Tibet and Nepal, wiping the landscape clean, wiping away homes of villagers and the villagers themselves.

Meanwhile, I’ve been watching as my daughter-in-law, artist Megan Martens-Haworth, chair of the art department at

Spokane Falls Community College, created a charcoal drawing of a big pine tree on an eight-by-four-and-a-half-foot sheet of paper at the college. Her idea was to make it a ghost tree, by erasing the charcoal and leaving a ghostly image of all of the tree except for its stump.

In the tree, she placed birds, a horned owl, a squirrel, a martin, a porcupine and at the foot a sleeping doe. As a nature-lover, she wanted to depict the bleak life of wildlife without a habitat. She painted some birds—a sparrow and a northern flicker—holding what she called “a ghost twig” as if looking for a place to nest. “If we don’t have trees, they don’t have

nests,” said Megan. In another painting she showed birds fighting in an empty tree. “If we don’t have berries, they don’t have anything to eat,” she said.

As she created the pieces for her solo exhibition,” This Was Our Home,” Sept. 21 to Oct 29, at the Esvelt Gallery at Columbia Basin Community College in Pasco, she made comments as she created posts on Instagram over the course of a year and a half as she completed the series.

In creating the pieces, Megan explored how humankind connects with the natural world, hoping to remind humans of their role as stewards of the Earth. Her goal is to promote environmental conserva-

tion and foster an understanding of the interconnection between the existence of humans and elements of nature that support the lives of wildlife.

“I want to inspire compassion, conservation and appreciation for the diverse creatures that share the planet with us,” said Megan, whose work is at instagram@megandmartens.

The poster for the exhibit is a fox peeking out from a burned-out stump. Other pieces include bees, butterflies and other pollinators flitting among ghostly flowers.

Her hope is to start people thinking and acting to protect the nature around us.

Mary Stamp - editor

World and Canadian church councils reflect on data centers, AI

A Sept. 17 webinar hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Canadian Council of Churches raised voices on “Counting the Ecological Cost of AI - Data Centers, Water, Energy and Critical Mineral Extraction.”

Jessica Hetherington of the WCC Climate Justice and Sustainable Development Commission opened the session, saying, “I’m witnessing a cognitive dissonance: a disconnect between the evidence and the way people want things to be.”

The Rev. Glen Chebon Kernell, a member of the Seminole Nation, executive director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan of the United Methodist Church-USA and a member of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, spoke about the earth as the original mother, and how the advancement of AI is problematic.

“I belong to her, and she is my first mother,” he said. “Our species has been rebellious and violent towards her, ex-

tracting, commodifying and trying to sell whatever she freely offers to creation.”

Wan Jou Lin of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan is doing doctoral research at National Taiwan Normal University on ecofeminism and Indigenous Taiwanese.

“When I look at these key issues, I ask: where is Taiwan in this picture and what kind of ecological crisis is Taiwan facing?” she said. “At this stage most of the discussion is about electricity supply. The question is: given Taiwan’s current

condition, can we really support the huge demand for the AI industry?”

Yoon-Jae Chang, a pastor and professor in the Presbyterian Church in Korea and the dean of theology at EWha Womans University in Seoul, Korea, addressed how digital infrastructure impacts vulnerable populations and reminded those gathered how humans and AI differ in crucial ways: “We are mortal. We suffer. We grieve,” she said.

World Council of Churches News

Spokane area faith leaders remind senator budget is moral document

In Spokane and Spokane Valley, 19 faith leaders joined 29 others in Washington State to send a letter prepared by the Friends Committee on National Legislation to Senator Patty Murray, urging her to protect Congress’s authority over federal spending and ensure the budget reflects shared moral values by funding peacebuilding, humanitarian aid and human dignity.

The letter notes that 1) our faith

traditions teach that all life is sacred and deserving of dignity, 2) caring for neighbors—at home and abroad—is a fundamental moral responsibility, and 3) faiths are called to work toward a future of peace and justice.

The FCNL considers the nation’s budget as a moral document that should reflect the shared values of meeting human needs and funding peace. The letter urges the senator to continue funding pro-

grams that allow families and individuals to live with dignity in peaceful, thriving communities and to continue funding international peacebuilding, conflict prevention, food aid and global health. It also expresses faith leaders’ concern on the state of democracy and “unprecedented efforts” to take away Congress’s authority to decide how federal money is spent.

The leaders urge her to continue and enhance the guardrails in the FY ‘27 appro-

priations bills, to reassert Congress’ power of the purse by preventing unauthorized transfers of funds, requiring timely apportionment of funds, mandating congressional notification of spending plans and restoring timely public reporting.

“Leadership that protects our democracy and prioritizes people’s needs is more important now than ever,” the letter says.

Alan Binnie
Signature gatherer for FCNL



Lament connects people with pain of others in disasters and daily life

Lament is universal.

In a world where minute by minute, we are continually and constantly aware of overwhelming global catastrophes and horrors, our bodies sometimes shut down.

Compassion fatigue settles in. It’s too much. It’s too hard. It’s too painful. We’ve had huge challenges of our own to struggle through.

The devastation of the August 26 flash floods in Nepal staggers me out of my self-protective numbness. Entire villages buried in mud. Over 1,300 known dead, and over 5,000 people still missing. Each with a singular given name. Each with loved ones who mourn. My heartache supersedes my need to avoid involvement. What can I offer? They are living a nightmare. My day is fairly undisturbed.

I am a person of privilege. Safe, warm and with family members nearby, I am tempted to reassign the pain back to the people who are having to live it. Isn’t it only their story to tell? I have no means to offer anything that could be of any help. It did not happen to anyone I know. I’ve not experienced their way of life, nor death. I can barely imagine a sliver of their suffering. They are in the jagged clutches of raw catastrophic and traumatic loss. Who am I to presume to step into their pain? My meager scream could never adequately reverberate into their massive wailing. What can I possibly do to make any difference in their avalanche of sorrow?

What can any of us possibly do? We do what we can to turn our shared mourn-

ing with the people of Nepal into action. Artists must create their own dirges, sing their own songs, paint their own pictures, dance their own dances and write their own poems.

As a dancer, I’ve spent almost 60 years dancing both the brutality and beauty of the human condition. Movement is my first language. This aging body has danced the resilient and determined reach of faith and hope. The celebrations of birth and buoyancy. It has also danced the shackled anguish of young girls’ sex enslavement in Kenya. It has danced the confusion and betrayal of abused children and women of domestic violence, the uncertainties and fears of kiddos on the pediatric oncology floor, and the depression depths of patients within a medical psychiatric unit.

My muscles and my heart know empathy. Though I have no cultural nor familial connections to the desolation in Nepal, I can come alongside to connect with their anguish. I contort into rocking, doubled over, crumpled postures that crawl and cry out in pain.

I dance my solidarity of lament.

I dance their story within my own cultural movement vocabulary, because we share the connective tissue of being human and this planet is our shared home. I must believe my dancing heart of hurt for the people of Nepal will somehow flow into a global circulation of combined hearts, throbbing for the pain of each other.

Though our faith traditions may differ, I will pray for them in mine.

Though the people of Nepal will not see my dance,

I will lament through movement in my own home...for the loss of theirs.

I will writhe in my own body...for the writhing of theirs.

I will continue to weep my own tears...because of theirs.

A dear friend wrote this poem for the grieving women of Nepal. Based upon a probable situation, this poem grew from a prayerful heart, desiring to hurt alongside.

My Name is Eniya: A Lament

My mother named me Eniya.
My children call me Aama.
I am mother.
I am grandmother.
I am sister.
I am wife.

One morning, like all other mornings, I left my house early to till the soil in the field. My husband still slept. My son and daughter-in-law still slept. My granddaughter, too, slept. It was a morning like any other morning.

But I heard a great tumult, people crying out, so I set down my tools.

I saw all the waters of the earth rushing down the valley toward me.

Mud and water and rootless trees.
And it swept between me and my home
And it swept over my home and those who slept there.
And I could not reach them.
And they could not hear my voice from

beneath the earth.

Oh, my husband. Oh, my daughters. Oh, my son.

Some mornings are not like other mornings.

Now I am a rootless tree torn from my mountain.

O, Maker of this mountain,
O, Maker of this tree, take this river of tears in your hands and drink.
Carry what I can no longer carry.
Hold what I can no longer hold.
Touch what I can no longer touch.
My name is Eniya. I am Aama.
I am my people and they are me.
Weep for me.

Judy Mandeville
Guest Commentary

Letter to the editor

The Fig Tree never fails to comfort and inspire me

I just finished reading my copy of The Fig Tree. Often when I read any newspaper, I end up feeling depressed and discouraged. The Fig Tree never fails to comfort and inspire me.

Thank you... Thank you... Thank you. Included is a donation to help with the wonderful work you do.

I don’t have a lot of extra and yet I know I want and need to be part of the solution, so all of us need to step up to make a difference, however we can.

Karen Mello - Coeur d’Alene

Calendar of Events

Area codes are (509) unless otherwise listed

Submit events to development@thefigtree.org by the third Friday before publication

- Daily** • **Second Harvest** Mobile Markets and Food Sorting 2-harvest.org
- Mon** • **Stress Busting for Caregivers**, Frontier Behavioral Health Caregiver Support Program, Zoom, 2 to 3:30 p.m., 458-7450, caregiversupport@fbhwa.org
- **Culture Nights**, American Indian Community Center, 5 to 7 p.m., 535-0886 aiccinc.org
- Tues** • **Passage Meditation Group**, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 534-7954, spokanebuddhisttemple.org, Easwaran.org
- **Compassion Every Day**, Weekly Class with Sravasti Abbey, Pend Oreille PUD, 130 N Washington, Newport, 6:30 to 8 p.m., to Nov 17, sravastiabbey.org/event
- Tues/Fris** • **A Language of Life**, Non-Violent Communication Practice Group, NAACP Spokane Building Restorative Communities Initiative, Tues 10 to 11:30 a.m., Liberty Park Library, Fri 12:30 to 2 p.m., Zoom, register brcpspokane@gmail.com
- Weds** • **Beginning Buddhism**, Thubten Chonyi, Sravasti Abbey Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S Perry, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 447-5549, chonyi.sravasti@gmail.com, sravastiabbey.org
- **Spokane Folklore Society Contra Dance**, Woman's Club of Spokane, 1428 W Ninth, 7:15 to 9:30 p.m., 838-2160, spokanefolklore.org
- Weds to Oct 28** • **Storytime**, Wishing Tree Books, 1410 E 11th, 10:30 to 11 a.m., 315-9875, wishingtreebookstore.com
- Weds Oct 21-Nov 25** • **Discussion on Magnifica Humanitas** with Liv Larson, ELCA Lutheran NW Intermountain Synod, Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
- Thurs** • **Taizé Prayer**, Zoom, 4:15 p.m., bartletts@gonzaga.edu
- Oct 1** • **Fig Tree Benefit/Fundraising**, Board Meetings, 12-1 p.m., 1-3 p.m., mary@thefigtree.org
- **People Who Care Luncheon**, Transitions, The Davenport Grand Hotel, 333 W Spokane Falls Blvd, 12 to 1 p.m., 328-6702, help4women.org
- **Into Africa Auction**, Partnering for Progress for work in Kenya, Gonzaga University Hemingson Center, 702 E Desmet, 5:30 to 8 p.m., 720-8408
- Oct 1-2** • **Terrain 17**, multimedia art and music event, Terrain, 314 W Riverside, Th 6 to 9 p.m., Fri 5 p.m. to 12 a.m., terrainspokane.com/terrain
- Oct 3** • **16th Annual Touch-A-Truck** for Junior League of Spokane, Spokane Community College, 1810 N Greene, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 499-1209, spokane.jl.org/support-us/touch-a-truck
- **Walk to End Alzheimer's**, Gesa Pavilion, 574 N Howard, register 9 a.m., walk 11 a.m., 206-363-5500
- **Oktoberfest**, German American Society, 4 to 11 p.m., richaspen8833@gmail.com
- **EnVision Gala**, benefiting SafePassage ID, Coeur d'Alene Resort, 5 p.m., event.auctria.com/d536aad3-1ebd-4413-9b2a-88aca65f63b1
- **Transitus Prayer Service**, celebrating the Jubilee 800th Year of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis of Assisi Parish, 1104 W. Heroy, 7 p.m., sborgiorno@fspa.org
- **Fall Family Weekend Choir Concert**, Gonzaga Choirs, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts, 211 E DeSmet, 7:30 to 9 p.m., ticketcenter@gonzaga.edu
- Oct 3-4** • **Spokane Symphony** Americana Masterworks Series, The Fox Theater, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 3 p.m., foxtheaterspokane.org/event/americana
- Oct 6** • **Faith Action Network Spokane Area** Autumn Regional Meeting, 1612 W. Dalke, 2 to 4 p.m., fanwa.ourpowerbase.net/civicism/event/info?reset=1&id=339
- **"From the Potter's Wheel to the Potsherd Gate,"** Flannery Lecture, Anatheia Portier-Young, Gonzaga Cataldo Hall, 4:30 to 6 p.m., mccruden@gonzaga.edu
- Oct 6, 13, 20, 27** • **Writing Grants** for the Common Good, Idaho Nonprofit Center, 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., emma@idahocf.org
- Oct 7** • **Caregiver Conference**, Caregiver Support Program, Frontier Behavioral Health, CenterPlace Event Center, Spokane Valley, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 458-7450, eventleaf.com/e/2026Caregiver
- **Spokane Candidates Climate Change** Forum, GU Globe Room, Cataldo Hall, 6 p.m., gonzaga.edu/climate-institute/events
- Oct 8** • **Bluegrass & Brews**: A Jewish Family Services fundraiser, The Grain Shed, 1026 E. Newark, 5:30 to 8 p.m., 413-8254, sajfs.org
- **Planning Ahead: Supporting Aging Loved Ones**, In the Center, 110 S Main, Colfax, 6 p.m., 397-4366, cydney@whitcolib.org
- Oct 8, 22** • **Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 p.m., 818-6733
- Oct 8-14** • **Spiritual Discipline** of Contemporary Iconography, Kara Gillette, Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, stgertrudes.org/retreats
- Oct 9, 10** • **South Indian Classical Vocal Music** Workshop, South Asia Cultural Assn, Fri Shadle Park Library, 2111 W Wellesley, workshop, 7 p.m.; Sat performance, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S Bernard, 6:30 to 9 p.m., Indian dinner RSVP at 467-5558
- Oct 10** • **Garry Bible Collection from the NW** Museum of Arts and Culture, St. John's Cathedral, 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., stjohns-cathedral.org
- **Gathered For Good**, benefit for Lutheran Community Services NW, The Boxcar Room, 116 W Pacific 100, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., lcsnw.org
- Oct 10-11** • **"Awakening Our Hearts,"** Communal Grief Retreat, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., harmonywoods.org
- **Read Together for Let Freedom Ring Day** in Banned Books Week, Spokane Public Library, Manito Park, 11 a.m., 444-5364, spokanelibrary.org

- Oct 11** • **Spokane Soup Fundraiser** for Community Nonprofits, West Central Community Center, 4 to 6:30 p.m., spokanesoup.com
- Oct 12** • **Following the Elders, Indigenous Peoples Day**, Riverfront Park, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Oct 12-16** • **Western Buddhist Monastic Gathering 2026**, Sravasti Abbey, sravastiabbey.org
- Oct 13** • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** Planning Meeting, Zoom, 3:30 p.m., kaye@thefigtree.org
- **Innovia Foundations Annual Reception**, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W Spokane Falls Blvd, 4 p.m., 624-2606, info@innovia.org
- Oct 13-15** • **R.U.N. in Unity Conference** on Salmon & Orca Recovery, Spokane Tribe Resort & Casino, columbiasnakeriver.com/run
- Oct 14** • **CDAIDE Chef Challenge**, Hagadone Event Center, 5:30 p.m., cdaide.org
- **People Power: Shaping Our Future Together**, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Benefit Dinner, 5:30 to 7 p.m., pjals.org/2026benefit
- **Author Jon Meacham Presidential Historian** and Pulitzer Prize-Winner, Whitworth President's Forum, The Fox Theater, 6 p.m., foxtheaterspokane.org
- **Rooted in Freedom**, Helping Captives fundraiser with Tim Tebow, Victory Faith, 2024 N Argonne, Spokane Valley, 6 p.m., 922-0939, helpingcaptives.org
- Oct 14-17** • **Women Build**, Habitat for Humanity Spokane, habitat-spokane.org/womenbuild
- Oct 15** • **Souppro the End of Homelessness**, St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho fundraiser, North Idaho Fairgrounds, Coeur d'Alene, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., donnabrundage@stvincentdepaulnorthidaho.org
- **Sabes Que**, Hispanic Business Professional Association, Nuestras Raices, 1214 E Sprague, 6 p.m., 557-0566, raiceswa.org
- **General Meeting**, NAACP Spokane Branch, SCC Building 6, The Lair, 6:30 p.m., naacpspokane.org
- Oct 16** • **Family Support Conference**, Spokane Disability Collaborative, Spokane Community College Lair, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., spokanedisabilitycollab.com
- **UnGala** fundraiser, Family Promise of Spokane, Centennial Ballroom, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W Spokane Falls Blvd, doors open 4:30 p.m., familypromiseofspokane.org/ungala
- **Mosaic Gala** for World Relief Spokane, The Pergola, 2928 N Madelia, 6:30 the 8:30 p.m. wr.org
- Oct 17** • **Socktober Monster Dash** 5K & Kids FunRun, Teen and Kid Closet, Heritage Cemetery, 10 a.m., teenkidcloset.org
- **No Kings Rally**, B.A. Clark Park, marches 12 p.m., main gathering, 4 p.m.
- Oct 18** • **Embodied Resistance**, PJALS and Embodying Racial Justice, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., embodyingracialjustice.org/course-calendar/introduction-to-embodied-action-one-day-course
- Oct 21** • **Diffusions: St. Gertrude of Helfta**: Companion for the Millennium, reading book by Sr. Evangela Bossert and meditation with Samantha Miller, St. Gertrude's Monastery, stgertrudes.org/retreats
- Oct 22** • **"Human Flourishing in the Age of AI,"** Weyerhaeuser Center for Christian Faith & Learning Speaker Series, Meghan Sullivan, University of Notre Dame, Cowles Auditorium, 4 p.m., forms.whitworth.edu/calendar/event/detail/11237
- **Dinner with Pope's Astronomer**, Br. Guy Consolmagno SJ, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 5:30 to 9 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- **Beyond Conservation: Rights of Nature** and the Reorientation of Environmental Law, Racel Kurtz-McAlaine, Gonzaga Institute for Climate, Hemmingson Auditorium and Live-streamed, 6 p.m., gonzaga.edu/climate-institute/events
- Oct 23** • **Trunk or Treat**, American Indian Community Center, 1025 W Indiana, 2 to 4 p.m., 535-0886, aiccinc.org
- **Rukavina Lecture: Loving Strangers**, Meghan Sullivan, University of Notre Dame, GU Philosophy Department, Hemmingson 004, 5 to 7 p.m., gonzaga.edu/news-events/events/rukavina-lecture-fall-2026-10-23-2026
- Oct 23-24** • **"A Jesuit's Guide to the Stars,"** Astronomy Retreat, IHRC, 6 p.m. to 1 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Oct 25** • **Dementia Friends Program**, Fairfield Community Church, 204 W Hamilton, 12 p.m., 954-3041
- **Taizé Hour of Prayer**, IHRC, 5 p.m., 995-0987
- **Aged to Perfection**, Cooking for a Cause, 55 years of Meals on Wheels Greater Spokane County, Shriners Event Center, 5 to 9 p.m., mowgsc.org/events
- Oct 27** • **The Letter: An Intimate Pilgrimage**, Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, stgertrudes.org/retreats
- Oct 29** • **The State of Women and Children**, Women Helping Women Fund, Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 5 to 7 p.m., whwfspokane.org/events
- **Strong Heart, Still Water**, Cup of Cool Waters gala and auction, Shriners's Event Center, 5:30 to 9 p.m., 747-6686, cupofcoolwater.org
- **10th Annual Bra-lloween Fundraiser**, Breast Intentions, The Boxcar Room, 116 W Pacific, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., breastintentionsofwashington.or
- Oct 29-Nov 1** • **"God's Greater Glory and You,"** Ignatian Retreat, Fr. Jack Bentz, SJ, IHRC, 4:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., 448-1244, ihrc.net
- Oct 30** • **The Third Cup**, tea and coffee, Mahima International, Woman's Club of Spokane, 1428 W Ninth, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., mahimainternational.org
- Oct 31** • **El Mercado**, Latino Market, Latinos En Spokane, 402 S. Pittsburg St., 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
- Nov 5** • **The Fig Tree** Development, 12 p.m., Board, 1 to 3 p.m., mary@thefigtree.org



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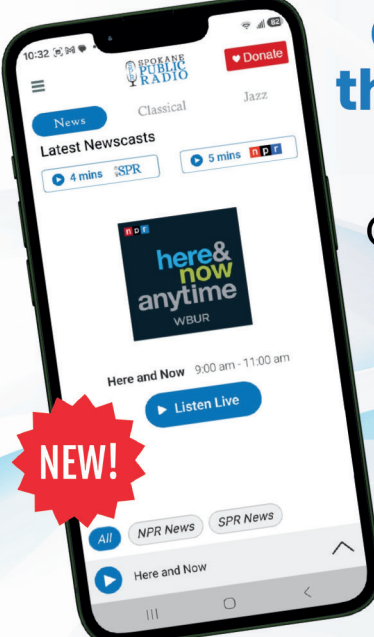


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Church partners to build bridges and conversation in community

By Kaye Hult
In June 2024, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Coeur d’Alene began a journey with six other churches in the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane as part of the first cohort for their “Building Bridges: Healing Divides” five-year grant under the Thriving Congregations Initiative of Lilly Endowment, Inc.

David Gortner, rector of St. Luke’s, described the church’s experience with this project to improve relationships among groups with differing views.

“The program fit what we were already doing in the community,” he said, “so the diocese asked us to be a cohort member.”

The core team—Kristin Keyes, Dave and Lyndi Phifer, David Owren and David—made a two-year commitment to the program. Others were involved at different stages, and St. Luke’s participated in quarterly engagements.

“Basically, Building Bridges helped the congregation know and own who we are spiritually, in ministry, in relationship with God and in our prayer life, helping us deepen faith, share good news and care for others,” he explained.

“Emphasizing healthy, courageous, caring conversations both within the congregation and in the community beyond our doors called us into conversation with others we might not usually talk to,” he said. “We were working at *building bridges*.”

Much of the first year was spent doing an inventory called “RenewalWorks,” from Willow Creek Church in Illinois.

“That raised questions like ones we’d been asking but from a more evangelical foundation,” he said, “The questions included: What are people experiencing here? Where are their groups? Are they new, status quo or growing in their Christian walks?”

“Some questions didn’t resonate with us,” he noted. “Generally, we’re doing well in deepening our faith.”

The group felt the inventory took much time in the first year. They were more interested in building skills. David led an intensive walk through the Book of Revelation to do that.

“Revelation wasn’t written with that intent, but through it we learned to respond differently, see a new way of looking at the book,” he said.

“We were already digging into and helping folks appreciate the scriptures,” David said. “That gave us things to think about for our enrichment.”

During the pandemic, people’s ability to converse with one another spiraled downward fairly universally, he noted.

It was timely for the congregation to begin using a tool called “From Many, One,” which asked questions: 1) What do you love?



Three of five Building Bridges: Healing Divides team leaders: David Gortner, Kristin Keyes and David Owren.

Photo courtesy of St. Luke’s

2) What have you lost? 3) Where does it hurt? 4) What do you dream about?

“Conversations could go in many directions. They helped us get to know each other in a different way,” he said.

“We also used another tool during the pandemic, a documentary and discussion series, ‘Finding Our Place in the Inland Northwest,’ in collaboration with the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) and the Museum of North Idaho,” he said.

“There was much inflammatory stuff with white supremacist fliers posted and other intrusions, including upheaval in the government, on educational boards and in hospitals. People were getting ugly with each other,” David observed.

From 2021 to 2023, St. Luke’s partnered with the HREI to offer events every few weeks, watching documentaries on history and cultural undercurrents in the Inland Northwest, and facilitating conversations.

Participants were asked to listen well, so they could speak for the people they had heard in the documentary. Next, they were to agree on what they had heard together. Then, in relation to a given issue, they were asked, “What do you love, lose, hurt and hope?”

The first theme was “When Country Becomes City.” Other themes were on class, labor relations, the working poor, Indigenous issues and race relations.

“We identified a common pattern that followed through to the present,” David said. “Given this opportunity for a bridge-building

conversation, extreme conservatives did not show up. There is a sad but real wall there.”

With Building Bridges, the church worked through the inventory first with their own congregation. Next, they held conversations with people in their lives using this tool.

“With good conversations happening in the church, we were hearing each other pretty well,” he observed.

“Then I began working with a few parishioners to strengthen the relationship between St. Luke’s and North Idaho College (NIC),” he said.

In 2021, after the make-up of the NIC board of trustees changed, board members clashed and key people resigned. Administrative leadership and legal representation also changed, and NIC employees feared being fired.

When NIC administrators didn’t seem to be able to hear each other, the college was at risk of losing its accreditation and federal funding, he described.

“In our contacts with NIC, we found that, while people on campus felt isolated, they had a passion for the quality, cohesive organization they were working together to create,” said David. “We felt a sense of calling from the staff, faculty, custodians and administration to help them create a warm environment.”

“I tweaked visits toward relational, one-to-one meetings, asking: What are you passionate about? Where is your passion leading you to act? What are your gifts? Then we invited them to gather with others to have more impact,” he said. “We went

on campus and had eye-opening conversations.”

St. Luke’s, after hosting events to get to know others at NIC—a fall welcome back to school and early Christmas celebrations—began to take the relationships in new directions.

They held an Octoberfest and dinner at St. Luke’s to honor NIC faculty and staff. Max Mendez, a professor, led a sing-along with his Beer Choir Hymnal.

They celebrated with people at NIC with picnics at the chapel twice a year.

St. Luke’s began interacting with staff at the Center for New Directions, which works with single-parent—mostly mothers—NIC student families. As they learned about needs, they responded.

In January and April, about 60 people came to lunches at the center. They shared a simple meal, held a raffle with everyone winning something—a pizza or movie night. They played games.

During two fun events last summer, David offered a blessing and a prayer, and church members asked how St. Luke’s might work with them.

“This approach with no expectations other than to build relationships took time,” he said.

NIC faculty invited St. Luke’s to join their Braver Angels group, reading Monica Guzman’s book, *I Never Thought of It That Way: Breaking Down Barriers*. Braver Angels is a national group that brings together conservatives and liberals to help them understand each other, find common

ground on controversial issues and, if possible, find ways to work together.

“The campus considered us trustworthy. We read the book and offered an off-campus site for discussions. When enough at the church and on campus had read it, Braver Angels offered a process to have conversations and monitor them. We’re continuing that relationship, meeting at St. Luke’s,” he said.

“It’s hard to build conversational muscles that have atrophied,” David said. “It’s like building core muscles. We need to lean into conversations because many people have been taught to run from matters of consequence.

“That’s not what Jesus, Paul or the prophets would do, or what apostles invite us to do. They invite us to know each other, walk the extra mile and give our cloak, too. We see this generosity of Spirit in Jesus. It’s holy work, bringing hope to people in our congregation and community,” he said.

“Building Bridges enhanced our bridging work,” he affirmed. “It gave us tools to get us over the hump.”

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