



Peace & Justice Journalism - Media Responsibility

To stretch people's thinking beyond the either-or way most media frame discussions, Fig Tree media seek to create a culture of peace, justice, stewardship and respect that empowers people, as individuals and in congregations, nonprofits and communities of the region. The hope we share inspires action and helps people see issues in new ways. opening them to explore nonviolent solutions. We both model credible communication through our print, online and digital media, and we speak at congregations and groups to teach how media can present solid content.

We have gained the respect of local to national journalists and faith leaders.

Through our monthly ecumenical/ interfaith newspaper, website, video and directory of congregations and community resources, we connect the faith and nonprofit communities in the Inland Northwest building dialogue, awareness and understanding.

Because media fill our lives, each person in media, churches and society must know how to use media responsibly. Part of our role in editorial content, modeling and through teaching groups is media literacy. Many media still dwell on sensational coverage of sex, conflict, violence and what's broken, to foster addictive consumption of entertaining news. They believe that's the way to keep readers, viewers or listeners coming back hungry, hoping for substantive information. Imagine what a different society we would have if media taught people to be-

lieve they can make a difference by being involved in improving their relationships, communities, society, nation and world! Peace journalism covers multiple perspectives in depth, rather than reducing issues to two polarized perspectives.

To enhance values of our nation, society and faiths, we need models of media that help us overcome divisions and isolation; that help us respect diverse opinions and people; that treat us as thinkers not consumers; that urge us to identify and resolve social problems and injustices, and that help us overcome gender, racial and economic bias and violence.

Access to news is no longer limited to mass media. New media are sources of information, providing inspiration so people become involved in making society and the world more just, peaceful and healthy. It is possible to address sensitive subjects like religion and justice, and to move people from indifference and hostility to respect, caring and action.

Media can reinforce human rights, dignity, diversity and respect through building understanding the context of people's lives and their perspectives beneath surface differences, beliefs and opinions. The Fig Tree breaks through either/or thinking and fears that lead to intolerance, exploitation, and hopelessness. It helps fill the communications gap left when mass media downplay crucial parts of our lives.

The Fig Tree began in 1984 as the communication ministry of the Spokane Council of Ecumenical

1323 S. Perry St. – Spokane WA 99202

Ministries to cover religion news in the region. Most ecumenical publications focus on public relations, so The Fig Tree is unique. In 2001, it became an independent nonprofit organization, providing regional religion and nonprofit news. Articles about people acting on their faith inspires more people in churches to walk their faith.

Our editor brings expertise as a professional journalist and sensitivity from local-to-global ecumenical experience. She coordinates work of a contract and volunteer team which we seek to expand. We offer regular training for writers, service learning students and the community to define our editorial approach.

"Responsible Media" will be lived out 1) through our approach of news coverage by example in our newspaper, website and other media; 2) by partnering with the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media and the World Association of Christian Communicators for resources, 3) in our editorial commentaries, 4) by training writers for our media and journalism students at local universities; 5) through our rural-urban connections project addressing the intersection of issues affecting people's lives and faith, and 6) in our Faith in Action Dialogue, which brings speakers to share how media shape lives, communities, congregations and our world. "Responsible Media" is designed to expand our capacity and our staff to reach more people and provide more coverage for a wider region through our mix of print, online and digital media options.

Fig Tree stories bear fruit, build relationships, model coverage



When we look at the evolution of journalism, the advocacy journalism The Fig Tree does is perhaps the most authentic type of journalism, because it gets to the heart of who we are as a people and a culture, to the heart of what news is and what reality is. - **Steve Blewett** - former head of journalism department at Eastern Washington University

The Fig Tree reminds us that life is about relationships. It has stepped up to the plate and been a model of how to be in relationship. There is power in grassroots stories, The Fig Tree's trademark. Church and faith have power when we put our beliefs into action for the sake of truth and justice. - **Bob Bartlett** - teaching diversity at Eastern Washington University



The Fig Tree beckons us to be part of a larger community. At times, religious life can feel lonely. Reading The Fig Tree reminds me I am not alone. I am part of a broader community working together to heal the world. There are risks to being alone—out of touch with the world, thinking there is only one point of view. - **Adie Goldberg** - education director at Temple Beth Shalom

The Fig Tree promotes understanding and helps us become more familiar with one another and more tolerant. We are not just hearers of the word, but doers of the word. There is complexity in the world in these times, and it helps to read about other people who are finding their way through the complexities of life. **Mary Ann McCurdy** - community activist



I learned from a horrible experience of prejudice that when we create awareness and understanding, hate and fear go away. I love how The Fig Tree takes a proactive role trying to create awareness and understanding. - **Shah-rokh Nikfar** - Persian Hour KYRS

Stories in The Fig Tree inspire us to reach out to each other and connect. They inspire us to be proactive and intentional, and to live the peace and justice ideals we have in our daily lives. I thank The Fig Tree for all the stories of hope and action that you bring to us. **Kim Harmson** - owner of Kizuri, Spokane's fair trade store



When I think of The Fig Tree, I think of the woman who came up with a dream to start a newspaper about faith people in action. As the first Psalm says, a fig tree is like a tree planted by the rivers of waters that brings forth its fruits in the season. Its leaves shall not wither and whatever the fig tree does shall prosper. We need to make a difference until making a difference doesn't make a difference any more. - **The Rev. Happy Watkins**, New Hope Baptist



The Fig Tree captures and shares sacred stories that build relationships. It allows the community to communicate with itself and to promote justice. - **Raymond Reyes** - associate vice president of mission for intercultural relations at Gonzaga University

The Fig Tree has been about peace journalism long before the term existed. Since its small beginning, the dream of opening doors, windows and tiny spaces, allowing communication, understanding and compassion has been its business. - **Deidre Jacobson** - social worker Miryam's House



To expand coverage of the breadth and complexity of the faith community, the Spokesman-Review reprints one Fig Tree feature a month. It is a relevant voice for the community. - **Rick Bonino**, Spokesman-Review deputy features editor

The Fig Tree is part of God's plan to restore peace in communities so streams of different theologies, perspectives and ideologies come together into a growing tide that translates into transformation. - **Rodney McAuley** - parent involvement specialist Spokane Public Schools



The Fig Tree empowers people, giving credibility to and building understanding of efforts to make a difference. It helps us network with people working on similar issues. - **Twa-le Abrahamson** - youth communications coordinator for SHAWL

It is crucial that we surprise people with what faith can actually do. Fig Tree stories are about you and me. They transmit what it is to belong to a community that inclines to the common good. We will rarely know the fruits of the stories. Inspiration can lie dormant many years before sparking new growth. - **Scott Cooper**, Parish Social Ministries of Catholic Charities



Sometimes reading news, and especially gathering it, can be paralyzing, because solutions aren't always present. World problems feel so enormous. I feel too little, too weak, too insignificant to make a change. That's where The Fig Tree can make a big difference. It connects people, shares ideas, stirs compassion, fosters respect, opens dialogue and seeks solutions. - **Virginia de Leon**, freelance writer for The Fig Tree



The Fig Tree's impact on the community and on me has been both constant and changing. It's constant in its commitment to tell stories of ordinary people who, out of their faith, do extraordinary things to create a more holy and just world for all. - **Mary Rathert**, director of the Women's Hearth

