

HIGHLIGHTS

SHINE Preschool featured at Advent service

LA GRANDE — The sermon at Faith Lutheran Church in La Grande will expound on Luke 7, in which John the Baptist's disciples were sent to Christ. They received firsthand knowledge of prophecies that were being fulfilled. Jesus gives a warning and a benefit: "And blessed is the one who is not offended by me" (Luke 7:23). The Wednesday evening Advent service this week will include SHINE Preschool's Christmas presen-

tation. There will be a soup supper at 5:30 p.m., and the "What Child Is This?" Advent Service begins at 6:30 p.m.

Pick a costume for the 'Spontaneous Christmas Pageant'

LA GRANDE — The La Grande First Presbyterian Church will feature a "Spontaneous Christmas Pageant" during the 9:30 worship service. The third Sunday of Advent will be observed prior to the pageant. Congregants are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite Christmas

story character or arrive early enough to change into a costume at the church. Starman will arrive to distribute special ornaments and a time of fellowship will follow.

Housing Matters group meets Monday at Zion

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran Church in La Grande will worship Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Fellowship and coffee will follow the service.

Housing Matters will meet from noon to 1:30 p.m. Monday, and lunch will

be provided. Quilters will gather at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

Christmas party and lunch follows service

LA GRANDE — Pastor Ray Smith will perform a monologue telling the Christmas story from the perspective of a census taker this Sunday at La Grande's First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The monologue was written by Dale S. Bringman and is based on Luke 2:1-3. Worship begins at 10 a.m.

Following the service there will be a party for children, with adults invited

as well. There will be a telling of the Christmas story, with the younger children in costume, Christmas bingo and caroling, followed by a light lunch.

Prayer services offered during the week

LA GRANDE — St. Peter's Episcopal Church in La Grande will celebrate Morning Prayer at 9 a.m. Sunday, followed by a coffee hour and fellowship.

During the week, Centering Prayer is offered on Tuesday and Morning Prayer is offered on Thurs-

day — both services begin at 8:30 a.m. in the chapel.

Submissions

Churches and faith-based groups are encouraged to submit Highlights for the Spiritual Life page by 4 p.m. Tuesday for publication. Submit by email to news@lagrandeobserver.com (with Highlights in the subject line), by fax to 541-963-7804, or by hand to the office.

Advent brings comfort — in Christ, there is comfort for his people

By Rev. Sam Wiseman
Faith Lutheran Church in La Grande

Advent means the arrival of a notable person, thing or event. The Church has established the four Sundays leading up to Christmas as the Advent Season. Jesus Christ arrived as "a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). Jesus arrived because "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The advent of the Lord Jesus Christ is God bringing us comfort. "Comfort, comfort My people says your God..." (Isaiah 40:1). Comfort comes because, in Jesus Christ, we know that "God so loved the world" — and "the world" means you. Jesus Christ came to Earth to live as a human, serve mankind, reveal God, die for the sins of the world, rise from the dead and open the way to eternal peace. The eternal realms with Christ are comfort again; hence, in Christ there is "comfort, comfort" for his people.

There is a lot of excitement during this time of year. God's love leads us to give to others; we also gather with friends and family as we recognize the reason

for the season: the advent of Jesus Christ. In the Christmas story, we hear of the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; God's great love is demonstrated in being born (coming to live with us humans) in this humble situation.

As we are involved with the excitement of this blessed season, let us be with Christ in the Word of God all the more so that we are not overwhelmed. Examples could include some of the following potential stress points.

Giving to others out of love is great; however, giving beyond our means stresses our financial situation. The opportunities to gather with others are great ways to keep and begin friendships with family and others in our life; nevertheless, these gatherings can also cramp our time and put us in situations that are socially challenging.

The potential for extra expenses and extra social opportunities could lead to anxiety. This is all the more reason to be more diligent in focusing on God coming to us because he loves us. While Christ was with us in his earthly ministry, he established methods for his comfort to be distributed. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, desires for you to

have comfort now. We can have that comfort, though only in part because we are in a fallen world where there is hardship, tribulation, tears and turmoil. Comfort now is received as the Holy Spirit brings us out of the hectic world and into the peaceful sanctuary of communion with Christ.

Comfort now is received as we are forgiven for our shortcomings, failures and embarrassments through Christ's established methods of granting forgiveness. The Bible has a lot to say on these established methods. Christ gave his word (Acts 10:43). Christ instituted confession and absolution (John 20:21-23), which is practiced communally and privately in some churches. Christ instituted baptism just before he ascended into heaven (Matthew 28:19) that washes away our sins (Acts 2:38-39). On Christ's last night before he was crucified, he gave his last formal teaching with the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28). This comfort is poured out in such quantities that we can say with the Psalmist, "my cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5). However, this comfort now is only in part; there is far greater comfort that is yet to come. Come, Lord Jesus, with your comfort.

As Christmas approaches, make sure your priorities are in the right place

Have you ever experienced times when you were excited and filled with anticipation but after it was over the expectation did not live up to the hype? Sometimes we even become sad and restless when life is going good, which may seem strange, but we were never intended to live only by our emotions. When it comes to our spiritual life, the Bible says the joy of the Lord is our strength. This is an internal confidence and peace we can enjoy no matter what we are going through. However, our joy has a tendency to leak out and needs to be refilled constantly, which explains how easily we can fall away from God and become cold and irritable. If we feel like a grinch and are looking for someone to blame, we can always point to the many daily distractions we encounter. Ignoring God is a sure way to become discouraged.

Christians are spiritually connected to their creator and have undergone a miraculous transformation, but this does not mean they are always walking with him or even aware of his presence. In the old life we were led by our feelings without any respect for God, his word or his people. But when you surrender



LIVING ON PURPOSE
DR. BILLY HOLLAND

your life to God, the idea is for everything to change including laying down your independence and embracing a lifestyle of trusting and obeying God's voice. This new identity includes following his decisions and letting go of the things that desire to capture our thoughts and devotion. When our priorities are not in the right place, we automatically become detached from our joyful excitement. This explains why many are miserable.

No matter how wealthy or healthy we are, this temporal realm is hardly a continuous mountaintop experience. We will all have our share of valleys in this life as they are meant to teach us valuable lessons. By the way, the fear and darkness of the valley does not matter as long as we are holding tightly to his hand. The good news is these sad and difficult places were only designed to be temporary situations. God wants us to learn how to overcome by allowing him to open our eyes and ears so that we can know what he wants us to do.

We all have free will, and even Christians can make terrible decisions. Jesus realized how easy it is for humans to wander away from him. How often do we consider that God loves us all so much that he is constantly trying to rescue the ones who have lost their way?

Many times when we are busy with shopping and entertaining we can fail to recognize why we feel a sense of emptiness and loneliness. Even when we are surrounded by family and friends and everything seems fine on the outside, we can experience a loss of peace and contentment on the inside as if something deep down in our soul is missing. This "something" is our personal relationship with God that we have neglected. As you approach one of the most hectic and stressful times of the year, take some quiet time to yourself and think about what is truly important. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me all of you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Dr. Holland lives in Central Kentucky where he is a Christian minister, author and community chaplain. Check out his website at: billyhollandministries.com

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">Services This Week</p>				
<p>IMBLER CHRISTIAN CHURCH 440 RUCKMAN, IMBLER 534-2201 www.imblerchristianchurch.org</p> <p>Sunday Services 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship Service</p>	<p>First Christian Church <i>(Disciples of Christ)</i> 901 Penn Avenue 963-2623 lgdisciples@gmail.com</p> <p>Worship 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>~Join us at The Lord's Table~</p>	<p>SUMMERVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH <i>A Place for You</i></p> <p>Sunday Services: Sunday School & Adult Bible Classes 9:45AM Children's Church & Worship Service 11:00AM Family Worship Service 6:00PM</p> <p>Wednesday: Prayer Mtg. Children's Bible Club, Youth Group 7:00PM</p> <p>A church for your whole family Visit us at summervillebaptistchurch.org</p>	<p>Amazing Grace Fellowship 1316 T St., La Grande, OR 541-568-4567 Sunday 10:30 a.m.</p> <p><i>2 Cor 12:9 My Grace is sufficient for you.</i></p> <p>IS 40:31</p>	<p>GRACE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH LCMC 667 N. Main in Union <i>"We are called to Serve"</i> Sunday School for all ages - 9:00 am Sunday Worship 10:00 am Pastor Carl Seelhoff Phone: 541-786-0447 grace.lutheranrove@gmail.com</p>
<p>COVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1708 Jasper St., Cove, OR</p> <p>NORTH POWDER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 390 E. St., North Powder, OR</p> <p>JOIN US... <i>Catch the Spirit!</i> Worship: 9:00 a.m. Cove Worship: 10:00 a.m. N. Powder</p>	<p>ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SERVICES <i>La Grande - Our Lady of the Valley</i> 1002 L Avenue Saturday 5:30 pm Mass Sunday 10:00 am Mass Weekdays 8:00 am Mass Union - Sacred Heart 340 South 10th Avenue Sunday 8:00 am Mass No Weekdays Elgin - Saint Mary's 12th and Alder Sunday 12:30 pm Mass No Weekdays</p>	<p>VALLEY FELLOWSHIP 963-0340 507 Palmer Ave <i>(just east of city pool)</i> Sunday Worship 10:02 am <i>Come and share in a time of worship, prayer and the study of God's word with us.</i> Worship includes communion on Sunday. www.valleyfellowship.church Email: vfchurch2@gmail.com</p>	<p>La Grande CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE 109 18th Street • 963-3402 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>LA GRANDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH <i>"OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS"</i> 1612 4th Street - 963-2498 Pastor Al Trachsel lgumc@coni.com www.lgumchurch.org Office Hours: Mon-Thur 9am-Noon Worship 10:00 am Fellowship Coffee Hour 11:00 am • Nursery provided •</p>
<p>La Grande Seventh-day Adventist Church <i>A Place where hope is found in Jesus</i> Join us in Fellowship & Worship Every Saturday 9:30 a.m. - Bible Study/Fellowship 10:45 a.m. - Worship Service 2702 Adams Avenue, La Grande • 963-4018 Pastor: Mike Armayor www.lagrande22adventistchurchconnect.org <i>Learning for Today and Eternity</i></p> <p>Little Friends Christian Preschool/Childcare 963-6390 La Grande Adventist Christian School Christian Education K-8th Grade 963-6203</p>	<p>FIRST LANDMARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH 1812 1st St. La Grande Pastor Dave Tierce • 541-605-0215 <i>We use the King James Version Bible</i> Sunday School - 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Sunday Evening Bible Study - 3:00 pm (Effective June 10) Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm <i>"Where you can find TRUTH according to the scriptures"</i> www.flmbclagrande.com</p>	<p>Zion Lutheran Church <i>(an ELCA church)</i> 902 Fourth Street, La Grande, OR (541) 963-5998</p> <p>9:30 am - Worship 10:30 am - Fellowship & Refreshments 11:00 am - Classes Pastor: Rev. Colleen Nelson www.zionlagrande.org</p>	<p>Union Baptist Church 1531 S. Main St., Union 541-562-5531 www.unionbaptistoregon.org Sunday School 9:45 am Morning Worship 11:00 am Sunday Night 6:30 pm Thursday AWANA 6:30 pm Knowing, Loving and Proclaiming Jesus Christ</p>	<p>First Baptist Church</p> <p>SIXTH & SPRING, LA GRANDE</p> <p>541-963-3911</p> <p>Sun. 8:45 AM - Bible Classes Sun. 10:00 AM - Worship Wed. 6:15 PM - AWANA</p>