

CHURCH

Continued from Page 1A
building. His yard sales raised tens of thousands of dollars over a span of half a dozen years. No items had price tags, which meant the many customers paid as much or as little as they wanted. It turned out, according to a 2008 Observer article, that many customers proved uncommonly generous, paying much more than what items were worth.

Talk of building the new, much larger church building began about 25 years ago when a building fund was started, said Dwain Spooner of Imbler Christian Church. However, fundraising was flat until Stolle became minister.

“It didn’t start to gain traction until he made this his mission. He was passionate about expanding our membership,” said Brittany Hargrove of Imbler Christian Church.

Rick Wagner noted that Stolle saw the building as a tool for spreading the word



Photo courtesy of Imbler Christian Church

The Imbler Christian Church took on no debt while building its new sanctuary.

of Jesus, not a trophy to be admired.

Carrie Hargrove said Stolle was a remarkably likable person.

“Everyone loved Leroy. He was your friend right away,” she said.

Stolle, who died about two

years ago, liked to send encouraging text messages to many people. Hargrove said the messages she received meant so much she never erased them.

Spooner noted that Stolle spoke of how Jesus was the cornerstone of Christianity.

“Leroy was a cornerstone of this body. Now he is the cornerstone of this building,” he said.

The sanctuary of the new building has a capacity of 240, far more than the old Imbler Christian Church building, which was

purchased in 1985. The old church building will continue to be used for activity programs but not Sunday services.

Groundbreaking for the new building took place Sept. 17, 2010, but progress was slow because church

leaders wanted to avoid borrowing money.

“It was pay as you go,” Wagner said, noting that the church did not take on any debt to construct the building.

Wagner said the new building is made of thick concrete and will likely require little maintenance.

“It is built to last, not to be a burden on future generations,” he said.

The concrete is part of the reason the new church building has excellent acoustics.

“Its acoustics are in the top 5% of anything in this valley,” Wagner said.

So solid is the building’s construction that nothing inside can be heard outside, Wagner noted.

Ironically, even though the people inside cannot be heard beyond the interior, the intent of the building is to allow congregants to more effectively reach out.

“Hopefully it will bring new people to know the good news Jesus has for us,” Combe said.

WOLVES

Continued from Page 1A
change under a proposal by the Trump administration to delist wolves across the Lower 48 states.

Ranchers have long argued they need to be able to kill wolves that make a habit out of preying on livestock. But environmental groups say management practices should focus more on using non-lethal deterrents to prevent conflicts.

Last year, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spent more than \$100,000 to hire a professional mediator, bringing the two sides together to try and find areas of compromise. However, the four environmental groups — Oregon Wild, Defenders of Wildlife, Cascadia Wildlands and the Center for Biological Diversity — pulled out of talks, describing the process as flawed and unscientific.

At the heart of the issue is the definition for what ODFW calls “chronic depredation.” Under the revised plan, ranchers in Eastern Oregon can apply to kill wolves

if they attack livestock two times within nine months. The 2010 plan allowed for killing wolves after two confirmed attacks over any period of time in Eastern Oregon.

The commission considered changing the proposed standard to three attacks in 12 months, though the motion was ultimately defeated.

Once a wolf or pack meets the definition of chronic depredation, ODFW can issue what are known as “controlled take” permits that allow other members of the public to kill the predators within a limited scope. Wolf advocates staunchly oppose controlled take, fearing it will lead to general wolf hunting.

The commission did approve an amendment to controlled take regulations, stipulating permits can only be approved through a separate rule-making process. In a statement, ODFW says it has not approved controlled take of wolves and has no plans to at this time.

Derek Broman, ODFW carnivore and furbearer coordinator, said the plan is not dramatically different than before, though it does reflect

the current situation in Oregon.

“We continue to maintain a conservation-based plan that is true to its origins, but provides additional clarity,” Broman said. “Now we have a decade of our own information.”

Ranchers from across the state traveled to Salem to provide their input on the plan. Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, said his members have “suffered enormous losses, both economic and emotional” due to wolves. He and others representing the industry argued for more collaring of wolves and management zones with population targets to assist producers.

Broman said collaring remains a valuable tool, but stopped short of making any promises. “The issue is, collaring wolves is a very exhausting, very challenging practice,” he said.

In a staff presentation to the commission, Broman said the revised plan does not establish population targets or caps.

Broman said the plan will

continue to emphasize non-lethal deterrents in every phase of management, and ODFW added a new chapter to monitor potential threats to the species — such as poaching, diseases and habitat destruction.

Rusty Inglis, a rancher and president of the Harney County Farm Bureau, said the success of the wolf is coming at a high cost for the livestock industry and rural Oregon as a whole.

“Ranching is a mainstay economic driver in most rural communities here in Oregon,” Inglis said. “Whenever a ranching family faces economic loss, the whole community loses.”

Veril Nelson, a southwest Oregon rancher and wolf committee co-chairman for the Cattlemen’s Association, said the losses don’t just come from dead animals. He said studies have shown cows suffer stress, weight loss and poor grazing that can all affect a rancher’s bottom line.

Still, ranchers by and large urged the commission to pass the plan as proposed. Environmental groups

were more sharp in their opposition to the plan.

“We do not want dead livestock any more than the livestock industry does,” said Kristi Kamal, Oregon senior representative for Defenders of Wildlife. “We need more from the state to be able to help producers to learn how to live with wolves.”

Ellen Marmon, a resident of Eugene, agreed that more emphasis should be put on non-lethal deterrents and less on killing wolves.

“I think our wilderness should be truly wild,” Marmon said. “(Wolves) are a precious resource, just like our farms and just like our forests.”

Commissioner Holly Akenson said the rising wolf population shows that the state’s management has been working so far, and the new plan will be a continuation of that success. She described now as a time to celebrate.

“I think the plan in the past has shown to be really successful,” Akenson said. “We have a strong wolf population. It continues to rise. I hope everyone here can find some support for this plan.”

BMTD

Continued from Page 1A
technology needed to isolate the alerts to Union and Baker counties. For example, because BMTD carries a number of Portland channels, emergency alerts for Union and Baker counties would have appeared on channels like KATU in the Rose City.

Senate Bill 394 will also allow BMTD to create a public service channel that will be able to carry videos of school board and city council meetings, local sporting events, forums, plays and much more. Some of the content may come from La

Grande Alive TV, an Internet based TV station.

Wallender said the community service channel will be a valuable service to people who are not able to attend the meetings of city councils or the Union County Board of Commissioners because of hurdles like health problems or finances.

“Some people cannot afford the cost of a round trip to a meeting,” the BMTD board member said.

SB 394 applies to any present or future translator district in Oregon, but currently it impacts only BMTD because it is the only one in Oregon, McHaddad said.

The bill passed 25-0 March 4 in the state Senate and 53-0 in the state House on May 28. Wallender credits the work of Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, as a key reason why the bill had such overwhelming legislative support.

“He was instrumental in pushing in through,” Wallender said. “He made it happen.”

Wallender noted that Bentz asked the BMTD for evidence that city councils, county missions and fire departments in Union and Baker counties supported SB 394. BTMD Board members and McDadded then went to many of the board meetings

of these entities to introduce SB 394. The BMTD reported to Bentz that all liked the bill. Wallender said that Bentz, armed with these endorsements, had little difficulty in persuading fellow legislators to support SB 394.

The Blue Mountain Translator District, founded in 1978, has broadcast towers on Mt. Fanny and Mt. Harris in Union County and Beaver Mountain in Baker County. The networks it carries programming from include ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox. The BMTD has three translator sites from which the programs, much from Portland and Boise, are rebroadcast. The BMTD car-

ries about 24 channels.

Users are required to pay a \$100 annual fee to use BMTD services.

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EOU

Continued from Page 1A

In February, Trustee Richard Chaves told The Observer he was worried about the governor’s budget.

“If that ended up to be the final result, we would have significant reductions,” Chaves said.

Around the state, universities are struggling with keeping tuition increases down. At Portland State University,

the Board of Trustees approved an 11.11% tuition increase in May.

The PSU student newspaper, the Vanguard, reported that more than 100 students and faculty crowded the board meeting to protest the tuition increase. The Vanguard also reported even with the tuition increase the university’s budget would be cut by \$10 million as well.

While EOU’s tuition increase is substantially lower than other state

universities, Moore said she is focused on keeping increases under 5%.

“We are not planning to make this an annual 5% increase, and EOU’s Board of Trustees is very concerned about affordability,” Moore told The Observer. “With a sustainable investment from the state Legislature and ongoing prudent fiscal management at EOU, we would like to keep tuition increases well below 5% and ensure accessibility to the students we serve.”

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