

## CHURCHES

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social distancing to slow COVID-19.

“We feel that it is important to respect that and try to slow down the spread of the virus,” said Bud Duncan, elder at Imbler Christian Church, pointing to the recommendation of 10 in a group as the number they are going by.

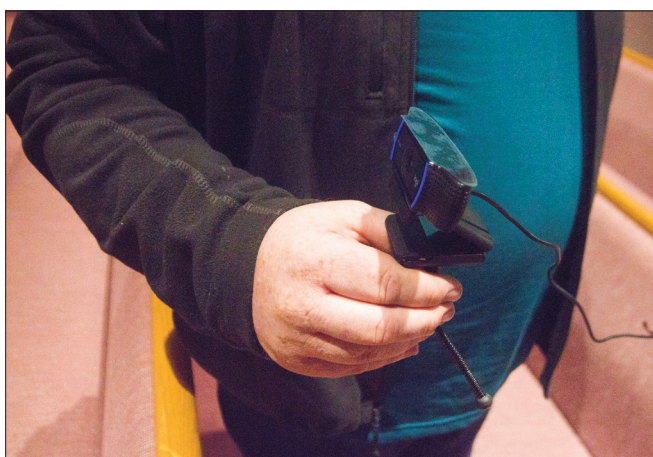
Duncan said about 80 people attend Imbler Christian Church on Sundays. The church posts its sermons as podcasts, he said, and considered streaming the service online. Instead, church leaders will hold smaller studies Sunday morning to comply with the government recommendation.

“What we’ve done is basically on Sunday worship we’re going to have small groups. The five elders in the church will each host a small group, and if need be others can help out,” Duncan said, noting the group meetings will be the same 10 a.m. time of their regular service.

Several churches will be videoing either their worship session and/or sermon live as they take place Sunday or prerecording them for worshippers to take in whenever they want during the week.

For the La Grande Church of the Nazarene and La Grande First Baptist Church, videoing their messages is a new venture.

Kevin Goss, pastor of La Grande Nazarene — which typically has around 130-140 attendees — said his church made a late decision to stream its sermon last Sunday on Facebook Live



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande Church of the Nazarene pastor Kevin Goss holds the camera the church will use starting Sunday to livestream its services, which it is doing in response to government moves to reduce gathering sizes during the COVID-19 outbreak.

using a phone, then decided to take a further step and upgrade its gear to better stream upcoming sermons on YouTube.

“The service will go online,” Goss said. “We’re being very intentional in using language that ‘Church is not canceled, it’s gone digital.’”

Sharon Binder, secretary at First Baptist, said the church also is entering uncharted waters getting the sermon to their 200 attendees — and anyone else who wants to watch. The church has, though, done audio recordings of its sermons.

“We’ve been working on livestreaming, which we are doing this Sunday,” she said. “This is our first Sunday livestreaming ever.”

Faith Center in Island City is among churches that already stream their services, and it will continue to do so.

Cameron Hefner, pastor at Faith Center, said the staff was working on plans to alter Sunday mornings as

typically around a total of 400-500 attend the church’s two services.

Hefner said the church recorded the March 15 service and was “promoting watch parties where people could be invited over” to view the recording and worship together at one another’s homes. With the new mandates on group sizes, smaller watch parties are being recommended. Now in their second week of recording worship, this week Hefner said the sermon will be recorded from a home rather than from the church building’s stage.

“We’re hoping that will help translate to a more personal (level),” Hefner said.

In Union, the Baptist Church will meet Sunday but in a different capacity while also developing a plan to allow for a small-group setup. Nick Ham, associate pastor, said the church will admit up to 25 attendees in the the sanctuary and will use its youth group room to house an additional 25 who would watch off a feed from

*“We told them if they need younger people to do their shopping so they don’t have to go into town (we would help). We would do that for anybody, not just people in our congregation.”*

— Bud Duncan, elder at Imbler Christian Church, on help older or at-risk individuals during the outbreak

the sanctuary.

“We will have a separate gathering that goes on at the same time for overflow purposes. That way we’ll be able to function,” Ham said.

The church typically has around 65-70 people attend Sunday services. In addition to the new format, there will be two Sunday services, at 9:30 a.m. and at 11 a.m., which will accommodate as many as 100 people.

In anticipation of the cap of 10 being soon required rather than recommended, Ham said the church has “a plan where we will go to a home church model. We will have a prerecorded sermon and meet with small groups in their houses.” The recording would be on DVD.

Churches also are taking a range of approaches for various mid-week activities, such as Bible studies, youth groups and small gatherings.

Some are suspending the activities altogether, some, if they don’t exceed the gathering limit, are continuing. And others are leaving the meeting of small groups to the discretion of the group leaders.

“We have Celebrate Recovery that meets at our downtown campus,” Hefner said. “They’re going to continue to meet,” because the group is under the 25-person limit.

With the caps limiting fellowship — an important

aspect of church gatherings — the various congregations also are finding creative ways to stay in community and connected. Binder said one of First Baptist’s pastors, Matt Carpenter, is beginning a weekly blog.

“He is going to be starting that this Sunday,” she said. “He’s going to be encouraging that way.”

Duncan said for older congregants or those at high risk of contracting coronavirus, his church is offering help in getting groceries or other supplies.

“We told them if they need younger people to do their shopping so they don’t have to go into town (we would help),” he said, adding, “We would do that for anybody, not just people in our congregation.”

Hefner said he had put together a daily devotional to go along with the church’s focus of study and are “right in the middle of that right now.” The devotional has proved beneficial as the church changed the way it operates amid the coronavirus outbreak.

“People are engaging that way,” Hefner said of using the daily devotional. “We’re fueling people’s devotional time, that time they spend with Jesus on their own.”

Goss said the Nazarene Church will be “sending out Bible study material and devotional material,” and the church body is splitting

up phone lists for people to remain in contact. Other congregations using email and social media to maintain a sense of connection during this time of “social distancing.”

The goal, Goss said, is “to still keep people in community, but obviously not as much face-to-face. We’re not going to stop anyone from getting together, but we’re going to utilize technology.”

This year, Easter is on April 12, and as the day approaches, believers are offering up hope and prayers they will be able to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ together.

Faith Center was planning to meet on Easter at McKenzie Theatre on the Eastern Oregon University campus, which Hefner said the church did a year ago and drew about 800 people.

He said it’s unlikely the service at McKenzie will happen this year, though it hasn’t been taken off the table.

Ham said in Union, the leaders are “hopeful and prayerful we’ll be able to do our Easter services at least in this restricted sense.”

Churches will have to wait — in the region and nation — before setting their Easter plans.

“That is still being developed,” said Binder, of La Grande’s First Baptist, “but we are planning to celebrate the resurrection.”

## COVID-19

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addition to advising people on how to do the same.

“We understand how to use our personal protective equipment, which includes goggles, gloves, gowns, masks of various types,” Ford said. “Right now, we are doing OK with our supplies, but we are all concerned the suppliers and stockpiles we draw from could dwindle if the virus spreads. That being said, in order to best protect the community we need our healthcare workforce to stay healthy and strong for as long as this takes.”

According to Dr. Inski Yu, an Infectious Disease doctor at Grande Ronde Hospital, home management through isolation is the best course of treatment at this time. The focus should be on preventing transmission to others and monitoring for symptom, which could lead to a need for hospitalization. Yu said it is best to try and resolve fever symptoms without medication to prevent masking the true status of the fever and improvements in respiratory function.

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems has called on Gov. Kate Brown to

issue an order to shelter in place. This order requires those who are non-essential employees in the workforce to stay home except to get food and medical care.

Ford said Grande Ronde Hospital supports this call to action. Brown has yet to issue that order.

The La Grande hospital and its clinics remain open for non-coronavirus medical issues. The hospital encouraged anyone who may feel ill with symptoms of the novel coronavirus (coughing, sore throat, difficulty breathing and other flu symptoms) to call their primary care provider for a preliminary screening before coming in.

## NUMBERS

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dismissed temporarily.

•Communicate with others by phone, email or social media. If you have a chronic medical condition and live alone, ask family, friends and health care providers to check on you during an outbreak. Stay in touch with family and friends, especially those at increased risk of developing severe illness, such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Fever, cough and shortness of breath may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

### IF I FEEL I HAVE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, WHAT DO I DO?

If you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your health care provider. **WHERE CAN I GET THE TEST FOR COVID-19?** Call your health care provider. Your doctor will determine whether you should be tested.

## UPDATES

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Monday will close all field offices to the public except by appointment. Offices will remain open and available by phone. Call the La Grande Unit Office at 541-963-3168.

### LA GRANDE

•La Grande Parks and Recreation rescheduled Pee Wee soccer for May. Meet Your Coach Day will be May 2.

•Veterans’ Memorial Pool is now closed to the public. The April 10 Easter Egg Swim at the pool is canceled.

•The EOU Small Business Development Center is not holding in-person client meetings but is available to offer assistance by phone (541-962-1532) or email (eoudbdc@gmail.com).

•Union County Family Law Advisory Committee canceled the April 2 “Helping Children Cope with Divorce and Separation” workshop.

•The Social Security

office is closed.

•Grande Ronde Fitness Club is closed.

### ISLAND CITY

•Island City City Hall is closed to the public. Staff is available via telephone (541-963-5017) and email (karen@islandcityhall.com). The drive-through remains open Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Water/sewer payments can be made at the drive-through window, via telephone with the use of debit/credit cards, or at www.islandcityoregon.com (all fees apply). Late notices and disconnections will be suspended for the month of March.

### UNION

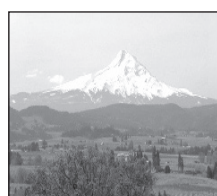
•Union City Hall, Union Carnegie Library, Union Public Works and the Union Treatment Plant are closed to the public. City operations will continue.

Call City Hall at 541-562-5197 to make an appointment or other arrangements.

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## Avista Customer Notice

**Recently, Avista requested an increase in natural gas rates for our customers in Oregon. We know you care about your energy costs, so we think it's important to share this news with you.**

On March 16, 2020, Avista filed a General Rate Case (GRC) request with the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC) asking for an overall increase of 6.8 percent in natural gas billed revenue. If this increase is approved, Avista’s natural gas revenues would increase by approximately \$6.8 million. The GRC is based on a proposed rate of return of 7.50 percent with a common equity ratio of 50 percent and a 9.9 percent return on equity. The Company would expect a final decision from the PUC by January 15, 2021.

The primary driver of the Company’s request is continued investment in our natural gas projects that support the safe, reliable delivery of natural gas to our customers. This includes upgrades and maintenance of natural gas pipe and distribution equipment as well as other information technology upgrades. Major capital investments included in the filing are:

- The continuation of a major project to replace portions of natural gas distribution pipe. The project is replacing hundreds of miles of natural gas pipeline that was installed prior to 1987.
- Replacement and expansion of natural gas pipe to improve the operation of the natural gas system and accommodate growth, development, and construction projects.
- Implementation and upgrades of technology systems that make it easier for customers to do business with Avista and that allow employees to perform their jobs and serve customers in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.

We understand that this requested increase can be challenging. We continue our focus on maximizing efficiencies throughout the company and minimizing costs where possible.

### Customer Bills

If approved by the PUC, a residential customer using an average of 47 therms per month would see a \$3.94 per month increase, or 7.0 percent, for a revised monthly bill of \$60.34 (inclusive of a proposed \$1.00 per month increase in the basic charge).

### For more information

Copies of our filings are available at [www.myavista.com/rates](http://www.myavista.com/rates), or you can review the filings by visiting our headquarters at: **1411 E. Mission, Spokane, WA 99202, (800) 227-9187**

### You can also view copies of the filing at one of our district offices located at:

580 Business Park Drive, Medford, OR 97504  
2825 Dakota Court, Klamath Falls, OR 97603  
10201 “F” Street, La Grande, OR 97850  
1404 Green Siding Road, Roseburg, OR 97471

This announcement is to provide you with general information about Avista’s rate request and its effect on customers. The calculations and statements in this announcement are not binding on the PUC. For more information about the filing or for information about the time and place of any hearing, contact the PUC at: **Public Utility Commission of Oregon**, 201 High Street SE, Ste. 100, Salem, OR 97301, (800) 522-2404, [www.puc.state.or.us](http://www.puc.state.or.us)

### Customer Resources

To assist customers in managing their energy bills, Avista offers services for customers such as comfort level billing, payment arrangements, and Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Services (CARES), which provide assistance to customers through referrals to area organizations for help with housing, utilities, medical assistance and other needs. Avista also provides support to customer assistance funds such as Project Share. In addition, Avista provides energy efficiency and outreach programs, including rebates and incentives, which help customers manage their energy use. Since 2017 we have partnered with the Energy Trust of Oregon for these programs. To learn more, visit [www.myavista.com](http://www.myavista.com).

This notice contains forward-looking statements regarding the company’s current expectations. Forward-looking statements are all statements other than historical facts. Such statements speak only as of the date of the news release and are subject to a variety of risks and uncertainties, many of which are beyond the company’s control, which could cause actual results to differ materially from the expectations. These risks and uncertainties include, in addition to those discussed herein, all of the factors discussed in the company’s Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended Dec. 31, 2019.

