

HIGHLIGHTS

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

LA GRANDE — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ “Come, Follow Me” lesson for the week of Jan. 11 will focus on Doctrine and Covenants chapter 2 and on Joseph Smith-History (which is found in the Pearl of Great Price) chapter 1, verses 27-65. These verses recount how Joseph Smith came to possess the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, along with the words of the angel Moroni about the restoration of priesthood keys by the prophet Elijah.

Submissions

Churches and faith-based groups are encouraged to submit Highlights for the Spiritual Life page by 4 p.m. Tuesday for publication Thursday. Submit by email to news@lagrandeobserver.com (with Highlights in the subject line).

ST. PETER’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

LA GRANDE — St. Peter’s Episcopal Church will not hold in-person worship this Sunday, Jan. 10, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A link to a recorded worship service for Sunday will be posted to Facebook on Saturday. The congregation of St.

Peter’s Church does not plan to worship in person until at least March.

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

LA GRANDE, ENTERPRISE — Wednesday, Jan. 6, was Epiphany, and Faith Lutheran Church’s sermon on Sunday, Jan. 10, will recount John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. This event involved a spectacular epiphany with Jesus in the water, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and God the Father speaking from heaven. The true God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit were present at this time, which marked the

beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Services will begin at 10 a.m. in La Grande and at 2 p.m. in Enterprise.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran will not worship in person this Sunday, Jan. 10, due to COVID-19. A recorded worship service for Sunday will be posted on the church’s Facebook page on Saturday. The congregation plans to resume in-person worship once Union County is in the yellow zone of the state’s metrics. The office also will be closed until then.

Walking with the Shepherd: It’s not all black and white



ROBERTA SMYTHE
LA GRANDE

Members of a Bible study I belonged to in Eugene often described life as “living in the gray.” (And they weren’t talking about the weather.) Over the course of various Bible studies we had done, we realized there were many instances in this world where things are neither black nor white. There are instances where one set of rules doesn’t always work. That’s true even with the Ten

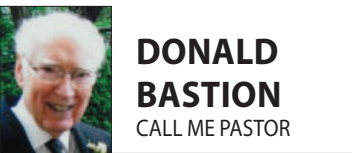
Commandments. Consider: “Thou shall not bear false witness ...” The classic example is: If you were hiding Jews in World War II in Germany, and Nazis came and asked if you were hiding Jews, would you lie or tell the truth? Some believe one should tell the truth, believing God will take care of the consequences. Others believe one should lie for the greater good: saving the Jews in hiding. I can’t say which of those responses is right or wrong. I think I know what I would do in that instance, but without actually being there, I can’t accurately predict how I would respond. That’s part of “living in the

gray.” Not only are there times when our usual rules don’t work — we also don’t necessarily know how we will respond in a given situation until we’re actually in it. So, if there’s no set of rules that we can always follow, how then do we live? Fortunately, our usual sets of rules, values, etc., do work much of the time. Most of the time, telling the truth is the best and right thing to do. Yet there are those instances when such absolutes don’t work. There may be times when there are no good options. In that moment, we must mindfully, and prayerfully, consider what is the best course of action in that particular situation. I’ve found it helpful to consider

what Jesus said about the greatest commandment: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mark 12:30-31a, NRSV). Considering what would be the most loving response, to God and to others, can be the best, if not always perfect, response, even if it’s not what our usual “rules” would dictate. The other part of living in the gray is that there’s less room for us to judge how others respond to difficult situations. What’s right for one person may not be for another, and vice versa. What’s

best in one time and place may not be in another. And if, despite our best intentions and efforts, we still fail to do what’s best, we know that we have a God of grace, who will forgive us. *The Rev. Roberta Smythe is the pastor at Zion Lutheran and St. Peter’s Episcopal churches in La Grande, where she has served since September 2019. She previously served churches in north-central and north-west Montana. She was raised in the Oregon City area and has degrees from the University of Oregon and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.*

After death, what then? Secularism has no satisfactory answer



DONALD BASTION
CALL ME PASTOR

For 13 years I was pastor of a congregation that met across the street from a Christian college. I had many contacts with the students and heard their varied life experiences. It was during the years when faith-denying influences were attempting to supplant Judeo-Christian foundations with a faith-denying secularism. Some conversations were about happy things — like wedding plans. Others had to do with working through highly personal problems. Yet others were about distressing circumstances and the need to find the best path forward. I carry the memories of many of those conversations to this day. One campus event, however, seemed to stun the whole student body. A member of the basket-

ball team took a bad fall during a game. Unconscious, he was rushed to the local hospital and then transferred to a university hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. He died from a massive brain hemorrhage. A pall fell over the college when his death was announced. Death wasn’t supposed to be a part of these young lives. Some were silent. Some asked, “Where is God in this?” Students came two or three at a time to a prayer room at the church. Why such an unyielding pall? Possibly because young people are geared for life, not death. Youth is for action, growth, new experiences and long-term dreams. Death is generally not considered a reality to be reckoned with. That shocking event took place more than 50 years ago. In our present era a shock of vaster proportions has struck us close at hand. COVID-19 has brought the word “death” back into daily conversation. What can secularism say to

this word? It may try to reassure by explaining that the percentage of deaths, as the virus works its way through communities every-

Among the answers is a deep-below-the-surface fear of death. My friend’s opinion was that secularism has been settling

the question about death is often met with denial or silence. I write as a Christian. I believe that hope for this life and the life to come is the twin blessing promised to those who have a living faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said to the grieving Martha when she wept over her brother Lazarus’s death: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Christianity does not dismiss or diminish death. Its reality remains for all. But a living faith in the Lord Jesus, who indeed conquered death, removes the sting of death and gives the promise of joy at the end of our earthly journey. *Donald N. Bastion, of Ontario, Canada, is the bishop emeritus of the Free Methodist Church of North America. For more of his writings, go to justcallmepastor.wordpress.com.*

“I believe that hope for this life and the life to come is the twin blessing promised to those who have a living faith in Jesus Christ.”

where, is relatively small even among the elderly. Also, we hear that science is coming to the rescue with effective vaccines. We are profoundly grateful for good news. But in spite of these blessings, secularism offers nothing to counter death. A few days ago I discussed this matter with a well-informed friend. Why the increase in suicides, depression, a general undercurrent of uneasiness? I wondered. It’s a complex question.

on our culture for decades and is inimical to Judeo-Christian foundations. As a consequence, there is no place for death in life’s sequence of events, although death is destined for all. This in turn brings forth the inescapable question for those without faith: After death, what then? Oblivion? Endless sleep? Some sort of vague reckoning? Secularism has no satisfactory answer. Therefore, for those in our own culture without faith,

Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches

Services
This Week

GRACE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Place
62848 Philynda Loop in Island City
“We are called to Serve”
Sunday School for all ages - 9:00 am
Sunday Worship 10:00 am
Phone: 541-568-4230
grace.lutherancove@gmail.com

IMBLER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

440 RUCKMAN, IMBLER 534-2201
www.imblerccc@gmail.com
Sunday Services
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:00 a.m. Worship Service

LA GRANDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS”
1612 4th Street – 963-2498
Pastor Taylor Gould
For service information go to
www.lagrandeumc.org

La Grande Seventh-day Adventist Church

A Place where hope is found in Jesus
Join us in Fellowship & Worship
Saturday 11am
2702 Adams Avenue, La Grande 963-4018
lagrande.adventistchurch.org
Learning for Today and Eternity
Little Friends
Christian Preschool/Childcare 963-6390
La Grande Adventist Christian School
K-8th Grade 963-6203

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)
901 Penn Avenue 963-2623
lgdisciples@gmail.com
Worship 10:00 a.m.
~Join us at The Lord’s Table~
Summerville Baptist Church
A Place for You
Sunday Services:
Sunday School & Adult Bible Classes 9:45AM
Children’s Church & Worship Service 11:00AM
Family Worship Service 6:00PM
Wednesday:
Prayer Mtg, Children’s Bible Club, Youth Group 7:00PM
A church for your whole family
Visit us at summervillebaptistchurch.org

CHURCH Service DIRECTORY

COVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1708 Jasper St., Cove, OR
NORTH POWDER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
390 E. St., North Powder, OR
JOIN US... *Catch the Spirit!*
Worship: 9:00 a.m. Cove
Worship: 10:00 a.m. N. Powder

Amazing Grace Fellowship

1316 T St., La Grande, OR
541-568-4567
Sunday 10:30 a.m.
2 Cor 12:9 My Grace is sufficient for you.
IS 40:31

La Grande Nazarene Church

109 18th Street • 963-3402
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.

Union Baptist Church

1531 S. Main St.
Union 541-562-5531
www.UnionBaptistOregon.org
Sunday Morning Worship Service 11:00 am
Sunday School at 9:45 a.m.
Birthing, Building and Being the Body of Christ

FIRST LANDMARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1812 1st St. La Grande
Pastor Dave Tierce • 541-605-0215
We use the King James Version Bible
Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship 11:00 am
Sunday Evening Bible Study - 3:00 pm (Effective June 10)
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm
“Where you can find TRUTH according to the scriptures”
www.flmbclagrande.com