

The Optimism of Grace: Learning to recognize ourselves in one another

When it comes to social media you might say that I have a love/hate relationship. On the one hand, there really is no refuting the fact that it uniquely provides us opportunities never before possible.

Nowadays our ability to maintain contact with one another is more convenient and more accessible than ever before as the old limitations no longer apply. Awareness about what's going on in the world around us has also reached new heights as we no longer have to wait for the evening news, but instead have near instantaneous access right on the feed of our favorite social media platforms.

On the other hand, social media does not always seem to bring out our best side.

One growing trend that I think we would be better off without is all the vitriol that is so freely spewed back and forth on social media simply because we don't always see eye-to-eye. Somehow it seems that speaking our minds or sharing our perspectives online has turned into losing all inhibition and treating those with whom we disagree as less than human.

Of course, disagreements are nothing new nor are they isolated only on social media.

But what is new is the current climate of increasing polarization and the loss of charitable discourse that only further alienates us from one another and pits us as enemies entrenched on our own sides of clearly drawn dividing lines.

And the further down this path we tread the less we realize how wounding our words have become because we resort to speaking at each other rather than to each other.

In the Bible, the very first words we read about humanity are that we are created in the image of God. It is the Spirit of God that has breathed the very breath of life into our lungs.

Now the implications of this are far-reaching but includes the fact that each and every one of us bear the indelible mark of God's very imprint on our lives.

As Paul describes in Ephesians 2:10, God is the artisan craftsman whose attention to detail has made each and every one of us a work of art.

Our lives bear an innate and inordinate value for no other reason than because it is God who has made us. And while this does not change the fact that we will not always see eye-to-eye, it does give us a new lens through which to see one another even when we disagree.

Once we begin to recognize the image of God in one another we can no

longer deny each other's humanity as though we were no more than simply enemies on the opposing sides of the dividing line.

What we all hold in common will always far exceed any difference that may arise between us.

The Rev. Kevin Goss has served as lead pastor at the La Grande Church of the Nazarene since 2019. He previously served churches in California, Tennessee and New Mexico.



KEVIN GOSS
LA GRANDE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

LA GRANDE — St. Peter's Episcopal Church will not hold in-person worship this Sunday, Jan. 17, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A link to a recorded worship service for Sunday will be posted to Facebook on Saturday. St. Peter's will not be worshipping in person until at least March.

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

LA GRANDE — The sermon at Faith Lutheran Church this Sunday, Jan. 17, will consider the friendship that Philip had with Nathaneal. Nathaneal struggled with certain details about Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Philip continues to encourage and

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).

share with him about what was written in Scriptures, and urge him to find out more. Both of them were blessed by Jesus.

Following the Divine Service will be the monthly church council meeting. Items to be dealt with include finishing up business of 2020 as well as considering opportunities for 2021.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

LA GRANDE — Individual wards for the Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints will return to in-person worship services Sunday, Jan. 17. Group sizes will be limited and the amount of time spent together will be condensed. Members will also be able to attend virtually if they prefer to participate from home. Contact your local ward leadership for meeting times and instructions.

The home-based "Come, Follow Me" lesson for individuals and families for the week of Jan. 18 will be on Doctrine & Covenants 3-5. This lesson focuses on the challenges faced

by the young prophet Joseph Smith as he learned his duties and responsibilities through revelations regarding Martin Harris, Joseph's father, and the lost 116 pages of manuscript for the Book of Mormon.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran will worship in person this Sunday, Jan. 17, at 9 a.m., with an annual meeting to follow. A recorded worship service for Sunday also will be available on the church's Facebook page Sunday afternoon. After this Sunday, Zion won't worship in person again until Union County is in the yellow zone of the state's metrics. The church office also will be closed until then.

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