

## SPIRITUAL LIFE HIGHLIGHTS

### Worship in person or online with Zion Lutheran Church

LA GRANDE — La Grande's Zion Lutheran Church will meet for worship on Sunday, Aug. 1, at 9 a.m. The in-person service will include Holy Communion, followed by a time of fellowship. The service will also be streamed live to YouTube. The link for that stream will be posted on Zion's Facebook page and website on Saturday.

### Conference planned for single adults

LA GRANDE — Aug. 1 is

### 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@lagrandeob-server.com (with Highlights in the subject line).

Fast Sunday for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members are encouraged to fast for two meals, make a donation to support the less fortunate and to share personal testimonies with one another in Sacrament Services and in our homes or other meetings.

The "Come, Follow Me" lesson for the week of Aug. 2 is based on

Doctrine & Covenants Sections 85-87, which gave encouragement to keep a personal journal and to listen to the "still small voice" by which we receive personal revelation, and provided warnings of impending war.

The North America West Area is organizing a three-day conference for single adults on Aug. 6-8. There will be virtual components and age-specific, in-person gath-

erings across North America. For more information and to sign up, visit [www.LDS-SA.org](http://www.LDS-SA.org).

### 'Bread of Life' has nothing to do with your stomach

LA GRANDE — The sermon at Faith Lutheran Church will expound upon the people who were "seeking Jesus" (John 6:24). Jesus addressed their desire for immediate satisfaction: "You are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves" (John 6:26). Jesus goes on to explain that he is the "Bread of Life," which has benefits for all time. The Divine Service begins

at 10 a.m. in La Grande.

The First Sunday Potluck will follow the service. After the potluck will be the elders' questioning of a confirmation student.

### Episcopal service includes Holy Communion

LA GRANDE — St. Peter's Episcopal Church in La Grande, will meet at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 1, for worship and Holy Communion. The service will be recorded, and that video will be posted to the church's Facebook page and emailed to members on Sunday afternoon or evening.

— *The Observer*

# LGBTQ youth of faith pray, bond at 'Beloved Arise' group

By **LUIS ANDRES HENAO**  
Associated Press

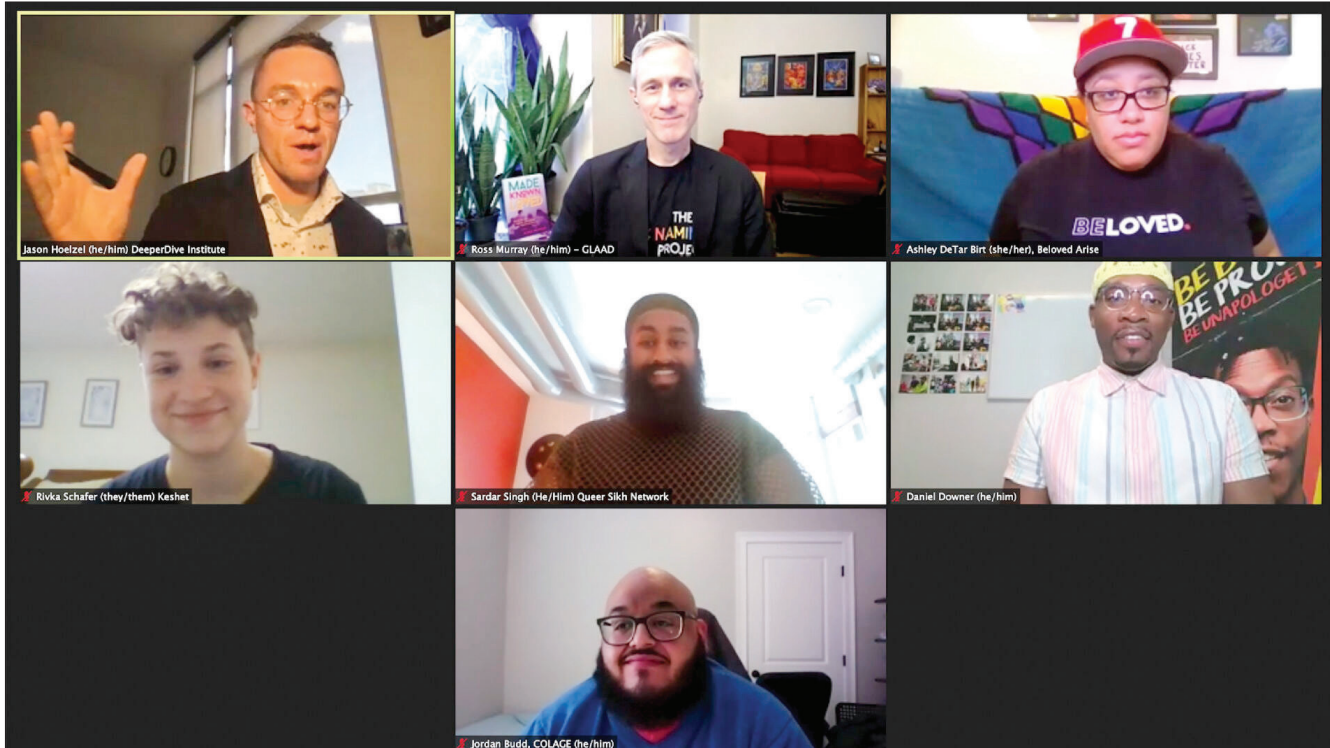
Jessika Sessoms grew up in a conservative Black evangelical family, attended Christian schools and often heard that being gay was an abomination, until she understood that she was queer while studying to become a missionary.

The 23-year-old from Florida came out publicly last year and has found healing and a sense of community after joining Beloved Arise, a Christian nonprofit dedicated to celebrating and empowering LGBTQ youth of faith.

Maria Magdalena Gschwind, 20, from Germany, credits the U.S.-based group for inspiring her to study Protestant theology in college at a time when she had doubts about whether her sexuality would conflict with her faith. Samuel Cavalheiro, 21, a Brazilian living in Mozambique, feels so connected to the group's members that he calls them his "chosen family."

They are among hundreds of young people worldwide who have joined Beloved Arise during the coronavirus pandemic to worship, sing and bond virtually. The group celebrated its second annual Queer Youth of Faith Day on Wednesday, June 30 — the last day of Pride Month — with podcasts, concerts, online panels of teens and seminars on LGBTQ history and churches.

"We wanted to do something that would be there to uplift and honor ... queer youth of all faiths," the Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt, program coordinator for Beloved Arise, said during one of the panels. "Something that would let them know that there's no contradiction between being a queer and trans person and being a person of faith ... that those things can go together."



Beloved Arise/Contributed Photo

In this Wednesday, June 30, 2021, photo taken from video, Jason Hoelzel, religious literacy and media specialist of the DeeperDive Institute, top left, moderates a panel on youth advocacy and ministry, hosted by GLAAD and Beloved Arise, a Christian nonprofit dedicated to celebrating and empowering LGBTQ youth of faith, during the second annual virtual Queer Youth of Faith Day. The day-long online event included panels of LGBTQ teens across religious backgrounds, seminars on queer history and churches, podcasts and concerts.

Across the U.S., circumstances vary widely for LGBTQ youth seeking religious engagement.

Some major denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention, condemn same-sex unions and say all sexual activity outside of a marriage between a man and a woman is sinful. But thousands of houses of worship, including many mainline Protestant churches and synagogues, have LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

"I can tell you how important it is to accept because I'm proof of that. I grew up in a church where LGBT people were accepting and accepted and loved," said DeTar Birt, who was ordained as a Presbyterian minister and has worked as a Sunday school teacher and youth pastor. "I came out in college and ... I had a lot of trepidation and anxiety around it, but the church wasn't part of that."

Beloved Arise was founded in Seattle in

February 2020 by Jun Love Young, a former board member of Christian development agency World Concern. He grew up in a Catholic family in the Philippines and kept quiet about his queer identity for years.

"I was so surprised in my 40s to learn that what I thought I knew about the Bible was gravely misinformed, and I just want young people to be aware that in every faith tradition there is a progressive faith that has searched the sacred texts and has created an open space for queer identities," he said, adding that he felt safe to come out thanks in part to affirming theology.

Young said his nonprofit aims to empower and provide resources for young LGBTQ people, "who often face rejection and shaming at home, at schools and in their faith communities." He said the group has grown to more than 400 members and expanded its social media presence during the pandemic to tens of thousands of followers on Instagram

and TikTok.

"Unlike other youth ministries that exist, we started digital, we were born in the cloud," Young added. "And we were born during the pandemic,

where the only way people had to connect was through digital means, so that really gave us the foresight and sensitivity to pay attention to where kids are hanging out."

Americans are becoming less religious in the formal, traditional sense, and the trend is more marked among young adults, according to Pew Research Center surveys from recent years. Young people are less likely to pray daily, attend religious services or believe in God.

Still, surveys show younger Americans are just as spiritual as their older counterparts, and many have found other expressions of faith outside formal religion.

Beloved Arise holds popular weekly youth gatherings online where its members pray, sing and discuss scriptures.

Cavalheiro, the son of Brazilian Baptists living in Mozambique, still struggles to talk about his sexuality with his family. But he feels understood by other members of Beloved Arise.

"It feels like we've known each other for a lifetime," said Cavalheiro, a college freshman studying computer science. "We've been through the same pain ... (it) binds us together."

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## Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches

<p><b>COVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH</b> 1708 Jasper St., Cove, OR</p> <p><b>NORTH POWDER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH</b> 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><b>First Christian Church</b> <i>(Disciples of Christ)</i></p> <p>901 Penn Avenue 963-2623 lgdisciples@gmail.com</p> <p><b>Worship 10:00 a.m.</b></p> <p>~Join us at The Lord's Table~</p>	<p><b>GRACE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH</b></p> <p><i>The Place</i> 62848 Philynda Loop in Island City <i>"We are called to Serve"</i></p> <p>Sunday School for all ages - 9:00 am Sunday Worship 10:00 am</p> <p>Phone: 541-568-4230 grace.lutherancove@gmail.com</p>	<p><b>IMBLER CHRISTIAN CHURCH</b></p> <p>440 RUCKMAN, IMBLER 534-2201 www.imblercc@gmail.com</p> <p><b>Sunday Services</b> 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship Service</p>
<p><b>SUMMERVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH</b></p> <p>Sunday Services: Sunday School &amp; Adult Bible Classes 9:45AM Children's Church &amp; 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 <a href="http://summervillebaptistchurch.org">summervillebaptistchurch.org</a></p>	<p><b>LA GRANDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH</b></p> <p><i>"OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS"</i></p> <p>1612 4th Street - 963-2498</p> <p>Pastor Taylor Gould</p> <p>For service information go to <a href="http://www.lagrandeumc.org">www.lagrandeumc.org</a></p>	<p><b>LaGrande CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE</b></p> <p>109 18th Street • 963-3402</p> <p>Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p><b>La Grande Seventh-day Adventist Church</b> <i>A Place where hope is found in Jesus</i></p> <p>Join us in Fellowship &amp; Worship Saturday all age classes 9:30 am Saturday Worship 11:00 am</p> <p>2702 Adams Avenue, La Grande 963-4018 lagrandeor.adventistchurch.org</p> <p><i>Learning for Today and Eternity</i> Little Friends Christian Preschool/Childcare 963-6390 La Grande Adventist Christian School K-8th Grade 963-6203</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em;"><b>CHURCH Service DIRECTORY</b></p>		<p><b>FIRST LANDMARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH</b></p> <p>1812 1st St. La Grande Pastor Dave Tierce • 541-605-0215 <i>We use the King James Version Bible</i></p> <p>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> <a href="http://www.flmbclagrande.com">www.flmbclagrande.com</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em;"><i>Services This Week</i></p>