

SPIRITUAL LIFE HIGHLIGHTS

Zion worship service will be streamed live

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran Church of La Grande will meet for worship at 9 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 8. A time of fellowship will follow. Masks are recommended but not required. The service will be streamed live to YouTube; the link will be posted on Sunday to Zion's Facebook page and website.

Regional conference for single adults begins Aug. 6

LA GRANDE — Members of the Church of Jesus Christ

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).

of Latter-day Saints congregations will be the speakers during Sunday's Sacrament Services on Aug. 8. Relief Society and Priesthood meetings will be held the second hour.

The "Come, Follow Me" lesson for the week of Aug. 9 will be based on Doctrine and Covenants Section 88, which is a revelation given through Joseph Smith in late December 1832 and

referred to as "the Lord's message of peace to us." The lesson's topics of discussion include the Lord's offer to us for hope and peace, and the fact that light and law comes from Jesus Christ.

A three-day regional conference for single adults will be held Aug. 6-8. More than 280 stakes have been invited to participate in a virtual portion featuring speakers, work-

shops and concerts. There will also be in-person meetings in some areas for age groups of 18-30, 31-45 and older than 45. For more information visit www.LDS-SA.org.

What does it mean to be united in Christ?

LA GRANDE — Sunday, Aug. 8, the La Grande First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will worship together at 10 a.m. Pastor Archie Hook's message, "United," will be drawn from Philippians 2:1-4, which reminds us to be of one mind in Christ. Our actions

should be from love and not selfishness.

St. Peter's holds Morning Prayer service

LA GRANDE — St. Peter's Episcopal Church of La Grande will meet for a service of Morning Prayer at 11 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 8. Per the bishop, masks are again required, and the congregation will observe social distancing. 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*

The word of God is living and active



DONALD BASTAIN
JUST CALL ME
PASTOR

Happily, the church I was pastoring was attracting young couples with little children, along with many other age groups.

Among these couples were Tom and Nancy. But after they had come to Sunday worship with their children for three weeks, Tom was absent on week four.

As Nancy gathered the children to depart that fourth week, I asked her if Tom was ill. Tears

filled her eyes as she told me of a decision he had made. He didn't need to go to church, he had said. He could manage his life without it.

I learned that Tom had a good job and was providing well for the children, and his Sunday golf game was with new friends whom he enjoyed. Sunday church was in the way and therefore taken off his schedule.

A week or so later, I visited Tom. He was expecting my visit and met me at the door with his engaging smile. He was a cheerful and self-confident man.

We sat down together

and our conversation was easy and mutually affirming.

Toward the end of the visit I mentioned I had noticed his absence from church recently and asked if he would share with me the reason.

My interest, of course, was his eternal destiny, support for his wife and his influence on his children above all.

Tom responded to my question but never lost his smile, and his decision seemed fixed. Before leaving his home I took an index card from my pocket, handed it to him and asked if he would do me a favor.

Seeming mildly amused, he said he would try.

I asked if he would agree to read the card at least once a day for two weeks, and then I would come for a second visit. I offered a prayer, we exchanged respectful farewells, and I went to my car.

When I went to his home the second time, the man who met me at the door was different. He was warm again but there was no smile. He moved almost urgently to the subject of faith.

In a very short time we were kneeling together at his bidding. With tears,

and before the Lord, he was confessing and asking forgiveness and resetting his values.

What could have stirred such a change?

It was the simple but penetrating word of our Lord Jesus Christ printed on the card I had left with him: What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 8:36-37).

It was not I but the Lord who had arrested Tom's attention.

The Spirit of God, working through scripture, had penetrated his

consciousness.

This story illustrates what Christians everywhere believe about the power of God's word: "For the Word of God is living and active. ... It divides even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow" (Hebrews 4:12).

Sometimes, even with scripture, it takes repetition to let the light in and illuminate the soul.

Donald N. Bastian, 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.

It's OK not to be OK



ROBERTA SMYTHE
WALKING WITH THE SHEPHERD

I've been watching the Olympics this past week. And like so many others, I was surprised by the withdrawal of Simone Biles from most of the events for which she qualified.

Turns out this was due to "the twisties," where the brain and body lose connection and muscle memory fails. I have no doubt that Biles did the right thing. She is taking care of herself, and she allowed others the opportunity to step up.

The team was able to win a silver medal, and Suni Lee was able to earn a gold medal in the all-around.

More surprising than Biles' withdrawal, however, has been the criticism she has received for her decision. And yet, as we have already heard from a number of top athletes lately (Naomi Osaka, Michael Phelps, etc.), it's OK not to be OK.

That applies to the rest of us as well. It is OK to need to take a break, and to take it. It's OK to take care of yourself. None of us must do it all, all of the time. Even God took a day off after six days of creation.

It can be especially hard to take care of ourselves when what ails us is not physical. Most people understand taking care of a broken bone or a fever but may not

realize it's just as important to take care of our mental health.

Depression and anxiety are not character flaws. They are illnesses. And like most illnesses, it takes time to treat and to heal. And like some illnesses (such as diabetes), there may not be a "cure," but rather a lifelong program of care and treatment.

Because mental illness is often seen as a character flaw rather than the illness it is, many are reluctant to share their diagnosis, or even seek help in the first place. Many still believe they are somehow responsible for their condition.

Some say God never gives us more than we can handle. I'm not sure that's true. If that were the case, we wouldn't see so many suicides.

Too many people are carrying loads that they do find too much to bear, and see no good solution. I've heard a better version of the saying: "God never gives us more than we can handle, but sometimes the world does."

None of us knows what kind of burden, what past or current trauma another human being is carrying.

We need to be more patient with one another. We need to be compassionate with one another.

You never know when your smile, your caring word or some other act of kindness will mean the world to someone who's struggling inside.

Roberta Smythe is the pastor of the Zion Lutheran Church and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, both in La Grande.



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Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches

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NORTH POWDER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
390 E. St., North Powder, OR

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Worship: 10:00 a.m. N. Powder

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lgdisciples@gmail.com

Worship 10:00 a.m.

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grace.lutherancove@gmail.com

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Sunday Services
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:00 a.m. Worship Service

CHURCH Service DIRECTORY

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Children's Church & Worship Service 11:00AM
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For service information go to www.lagrandeumc.org

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Services This Week