

SPIRITUAL LIFE HIGHLIGHTS

Upcoming weekly lessons focus on Old Testament

NORTHEASTERN OREGON — On Sunday, Dec. 26, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' worship services will be limited to a Sacrament Meeting, thus meeting times may be impacted. Starting Jan. 2, 2022, the meeting times for wards sharing the same building will rotate. Members are reminded to check with their ward's leadership with questions about schedule changes.

Starting with the week of Dec. 27, the study of the Old Testament will be the focus of the

"Come, Follow Me" curriculum. Moses 1 and Abraham 3 (found in the Pearl of Great Price) are the scriptures covered in the first week, as they provide greater insight into the life of Moses and the creation of this world we live in. All lesson materials are available from the free Gospel Library mobile app and on the church's website.

Ecumenical Christmas Eve service available online

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran Church's Christmas Eve service, on Friday, Dec. 24, will be held at 4 p.m. A prerecorded ecumenical Christmas Eve ser-

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).

vice will be available on Zion's website and Facebook page by Friday morning. On Sunday, Dec. 26, Zion Lutheran will meet for worship at 9 a.m. Fellowship time will follow the service. Masks and social distancing are required at all in-person gatherings. The

Sunday service will not be live-streamed or recorded.

Morning Prayer service planned for Dec. 26

LA GRANDE — St. Peter's Episcopal Church will have an in-person Christmas Eve service on Friday, Dec. 24, at 6 p.m. A pre-recorded ecumenical Christmas Eve service will also be available on St. Peter's Facebook page by Friday morning. A Morning Prayer service begins at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 26. That service will not be live-streamed or recorded. In-person services require masks and social distancing.

Sunday sermon based on Luke 22

LA GRANDE — Faith Lutheran Church will lead a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 24, and a Divine Service at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 26. Sunday's sermon will be based on Luke 2:22-40. In these verses, two dear souls in the house of the Lord celebrated being with Jesus Christ. One of them sang, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." Jesus Christ is the Savior, and we are welcomed and encouraged to worship him.

— The Observer

They are our neighbors



STEVEN KOSKI
OTHER VIEWS

A wrong idea has taken root in the world — that some lives are less valuable than other lives. There's a lot of concern regarding finding good solutions for those who are houseless in our community. It's interesting to have these conversations at a time when Christians remember Mary and Joseph about to give birth to Jesus seeking shelter and being told there was no room for them.

We need to have healthy debates about the best solutions for our houseless neighbors and for our community — just as we would about education choices for our children, open space protection for our parks, and affordable housing that might help prevent homelessness in the first place.

What we ask our community to change is the way we talk about our houseless neighbors in demeaning and dehumanizing ways. We ask you, our community, to change seeing and treating our houseless neighbors as if their lives are less important than our lives — as if houselessness is the only thing that defines them.

A question we keep hearing is "What do we do about homeless people?" as if they are a problem to be solved and not people who deserve love and respect. What if we asked, "How can we find solutions where everyone has a chance to flourish?"

An underlying assumption lurks in this rhetoric, implying that some people choose to be homeless. Roughly 90% of those experiencing homelessness find

"Imagine if we had the kind of compassion that stood in awe at the trauma and burdens that those who are houseless have to carry, rather than standing in judgment over how they carry it."

— Rev. Steven Koski, First Presbyterian Church, Bend

themselves in that situation due to unforeseen life circumstances. They are typically houseless for less than a year and then thrive again through access to available supports. Roughly 10% experience homelessness as a chronic condition.

The chronically houseless are often talked about in dehumanizing ways. Many are living with a mental illness. A person struggling with schizophrenia, for example, doesn't choose to live with that illness and deserves

our compassion and not our judgment.

Many who are chronically houseless suffer from post-traumatic stress because of repeated traumatic events in their lives. Trauma is not a choice. Imagine if we had the kind of compassion that stood in awe at the trauma and burdens that those who are houseless have to carry, rather than standing in judgment over how they carry it. Substance abuse is often

a factor. Some will argue that's a choice, but substance abuse is often an attempt to cope with devastating mental illness or trauma. Dealing with mental health issues or sobriety is hard enough when you are not living on the streets and next to impossible when you lack support, stability and resources.

The answer to the question, "What do we do about this?" is easy. We offer as much compassion as possible. Everyone deserves

a warm and safe place to sleep. Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

Father Greg Boyle founded Homeboy Industries, which is the largest and most successful gang intervention and rehabilitation program in the world. Father Boyle believes what changes people is not efforts to rescue or save, but kinship. He said, "The measure of our compassion is our willingness to see ourselves in kinship with others."

As we continue searching for good solutions and sharing valid concerns, we ask our community to remember that those experiencing homelessness are not a problem to be solved but our neighbors whose lives are just as important as each of ours.

This piece was written by Steven Koski, lead pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Bend. Signing on to the letter were Rev. Chris Kramer, Nativity Lutheran; Rev. Jen Stuart, Bend Church; Rev. Jed Holdorff, Trinity Episcopal Church; Rev. Jane Hiatt, Unity Community of Central Oregon; Rev. Andrew Bansemmer, Grace First Lutheran; Rev. Scott Rudolph, UU Fellowship of Central Oregon; and Rev. Erika Spaet, Storydwelling.

All God has ever wanted is our heart

By **WILLIAM F. "BILLY" HOLLAND JR.**

The holiday season is called the most wonderful time of the year, but between buying gifts, hosting parties, trying not to break your healthy habits (or the bank) and attending family gatherings, it can also be the most stressful time of the year. Once again, we are trying to figure out what to give people who already have everything they need.

I'm trying to understand how we went from the wise men bringing gifts to Christ as an act of worship to the ritual of giving gifts to each other. I don't remember Mary and Joseph exchanging presents with the shepherds, or Bethlehem being decorated with tinsel and ribbons. Yes, there is widespread affection for the magical stories

and traditions that we are accustomed to, but we also understand that much of our holiday festivities have little to do with Christ.

So what does Christ want for Christmas? Among the flying reindeer, the abominable snowman and magical elves, may we humbly realize that all God has ever wanted is our heart. Galatians 4:19 is not usually considered a Christmas text, but the Apostle Paul makes a very interesting statement, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you." Is this not an appropriate time to declare our need for Jesus to be born into our lives? This holy truth is as life changing today as it was the moment Jesus appeared.

— Read more at www.billyhollandministries.com.

eOMEDIA group
The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.
eomediagroup.com

Ask us about free delivery

Helping you with your cooking traditions

MAYTAG

ELGIN ELECTRIC
43 N. 8th Elgin, OR 541-437-2054

Elgin Baptist Church
Welcomes new Pastor

It is with great pleasure that Elgin Baptist Church, 1325 Hartford Street, Elgin, OR, welcomes Pastor Bobby Johnson as the new Pastor of our congregation. His first service with us was the beginning of Advent, Sunday, November 28th. He is coming from Valley Baptist Church in McMinnville, OR with his wife, Priscilla, and their five children. Pastor Johnson is the son-in-law of our former Pastor Brad Richmond, who was called home to be with the Lord in 2016.

We would be delighted to have you come and meet and learn all about the Johnsons at our Christmas Eve service, 6:00 p.m. at Elgin Baptist Church. Our regular services are 10:00 a.m. adult Sunday School and 11:00 a.m. worship service. We welcome all who choose to attend.

Top left: Josiah, Pastor, Amelia Lower row: Jesse, Mom Priscilla, Justice & Abigail

Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches

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