



Dick Mason/The Observer

Susanne Watson, left, checks an earring worn by Linda Dixon on Sunday, Aug. 14, 2022, in the sanctuary of the North Powder Community United Methodist Church. Watson and Dixon both give Bible-centered talks at the church.

MILESTONE

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much like it did 139 years ago, according to Jeff Nielsen, a member of the church's congregation.

"It is pretty unique. Most churches this old have been remodeled at least five times," he said. "It is an original pioneer church. It is pretty phenomenal."

The church also has ledgers filled with the names of almost all the members of the congregations dating back to the 1800s.

"If these walls could talk, they could tell so much about the generations of people who grew up here," Nielsen said.

The North Powder Community United Methodist Church has about twice the square footage it had when it opened in 1883, according to Linda Dixon, a member of the congregation. In the 1940s an east-side addition was built on. Today, this addition houses the church's Sunday school program, one temporarily shut down after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the community's food bank.

The food bank, an outreach of the church, is run with major help from Dixon and her husband, Floyd, who travel to Island City each month to pick up supplies from the Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank.



Dick Mason/The Observer

This is a portion of the sanctuary of the North Powder Community United Methodist Church as it appeared on Sunday, Aug. 14, 2022.

Older is sometimes better

In an ironic twist, operating the older half of the building is today less expensive than running its newer half, since the older section has no plumbing. This means it does not need heat to keep water pipes from freezing, said Joyce Lawyer, a member of the church's congregation for more than 60 years.

The church's sanctuary is instead reliant on a woodstove in the winter.

"It can get so hot that it almost drives people out of here," Linda Dixon said with a smile.

Messages to remember

A focal point of services in the sanctuary are Bible-cen-

tered talks given on alternating weeks by Dixon and Susanne Watson, also a congregation member.

Watson said she feels blessed to be able to help give the talks because preparing for them has been so enriching.

"I have learned so much more about the Lord and the Bible," she said.

The North Powder Community United Methodist Church today has a congregation of fewer than 20 people — much smaller than what it once had. Nevertheless, the church's future appears solid because it has a long-running tradition as a focal point for community events. This

means that whenever help is needed to keep the building operating, people step forward instantly, many of whom are not members of the congregation.

"Whenever we need help, all we have to do is ask," Dixon said.

Volunteers who help the church, but are not members, include Ted Golden, who assists in delivering food from Island City to North Powder for the food bank.

The church also hosts community events, such as the annual silver tea that has happened for 102 years, Lawyer said. Pews are temporarily removed from the sanctuary to make room for the tea, which draws at least 50 people each year.

Another popular event at the church is its annual Easter egg hunt, typically attracting about 100 children. This year's Easter egg hunt, Dixon said, was run with several inches of snow on the ground.

Such events are under the direction of a congregation that is remarkably close, Watson said.

"The people who attend are not just friends and neighbors," she said. "We are more like a family."

And this family has no shortage of generosity.

"We want to help as many people as we can," Watson said.

ARREST

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Police spoke with Ward at his home, where he told Sgt. Jared Rogers that he damaged his car the night of Aug. 12 after driving into a ditch to avoid a tree on Fox Hill Road. After speaking with Ward, Rogers requested he come to the police station to talk with Detective Scott Norton. Ward's car was impounded and plastic pieces that had fallen off

the car were collected as evidence.

During his interview with police, Ward told Norton a different series of events. He said he went to Bud Jackson's Eatery & Taps and Tap That on Adams Avenue, and on his way home he decided to continue onto Fox Hill Road and drove up to the radio towers on top of Mount Emily. Ward said shortly after leaving from the towers he struck a small tree on the side of the road, which caused the damage

to the front of his car and a tree branch struck his windshield.

Norton confirmed with Ward that he was the only one driving his car Aug. 13 and the only one who had access to the car.

While the interview was happening, Police Chief Gary Bell and Miller compared a piece of evidence collected at the scene with a piece of plastic trim that was collected at Ward's house.

"It was clear the two pieces of plastic had been

broken off of each other," wrote Miller in police documentation.

Miller and Rogers confronted Ward with the evidence that proved his car was at the crash scene. Ward continued to tell law enforcement he did not remember what happened that night. He eventually revealed to police that he remembered seeing a dark shadow and heard a thump on his car, but he continued driving. In statements during his interview, Ward said he thought it could

have been a garbage can, tree branch or something thrown at his car.

Ward went on to tell police he had been drinking that night, saying he had a total of six beers and three Fireball "shooters."

"Ward told us if the evidence showed his car was at the scene, then it was him who struck Andrew. He told me he did not hit Andrew on purpose and he would never hit someone on purpose. He said if it was his car that hit Andrew it was

an accident," wrote Miller.

Ward was taken into custody without incident and booked in the Union County Jail, according to Bell. He has been charged with second-degree manslaughter and failure to perform the duties of a driver to an injured person. So far, Ward has cooperated with the investigation, Bell said.

La Grande attorney Rick Dall was appointed as Ward's counsel by the court. Bail is set at \$50,000 and a status check is scheduled for Sept. 7.

EOU

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options of appointing co-presidents, naming an external interim president who has experience working with the university, elevating an internal individual, or conducting a search for an interim appointment.

Over the past two weeks, the board engaged with EOU's shared governance bodies to gain feedback from faculty, students and staff to inform its decision. They also reached out to employee labor groups and connected with the university's alumni board and foundation board to understand the impact the decision may have on each organization.

"After having listened to the discussion and reading public comments,

we (decided we) need to take the time to find the next great leader of EOU," trustee Cedric Riel said. "For the interim, I think we should go with people who are passionate about and committed to the university. I believe Lara and Richard are those people."

Martin also stressed the importance of new leadership working with the academic side of the university and engaging with deans and Seimears. Trustee and professor Anna Cavinato strongly encouraged open communication to seek feedback from the faculty.

"I believe in EOU's community," Moore said. "We have gone through a number of leadership transitions in the past, and I have confidence that we will come out of this transition with a great leader for EOU. In the meantime, I'm ready for a fantastic year."

The board will meet in the next few weeks to determine how to proceed with the search process.



Insko

Grande Ronde Hospital & Clinics proudly welcomes Tracy Epperson, MD—Psychiatrist



Before earning her medical degree, Dr. Epperson devoted more than 20 years to working as a sign language interpreter. Working with the deaf community to help address their unique mental health needs is a professional passion of hers.

Another professional focus is nutritional psychiatry, and teaching people how strongly diet and lifestyle influence mental health.

Dr. Epperson's broad list of personal interests include hiking, kayaking, reading, photography, crocheting, and gardening.

Please help us welcome Dr. Epperson and her family to our Community!!



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