

speckled with 13 churches, has opened its arms to the women. Although the area might be full of newcomers with more liberal ideologies, it also consists of natives with more conservative views. Their acceptance and kindness have moved Mann and Erb.

"In the church, the majority are locals. That is what makes (being embraced) even more phenomenal," Erb says. "We've been truly welcomed with warmth. Wherever we go, it's genuine."

During visits to the bank, they are greeted with, "It's nice to see you two." When she arrives solo, Erb says people always ask about Mann. "I think they just think of us as people," she says.

Word about the newcomers got around fast. Once while shopping in Hood River, Mann got into a conversation with a clerk she thought might be gay.

Suddenly, the clerk realized whom she was talking to. "You're either the gay pastor or the Jewish partner," Mann says the clerk blurted out.

Erb and Mann, who hail from Houston and Philadelphia, respectively, have found a satisfying social life that spans both sides of the river. Little by little, they've connected with other women in the area.

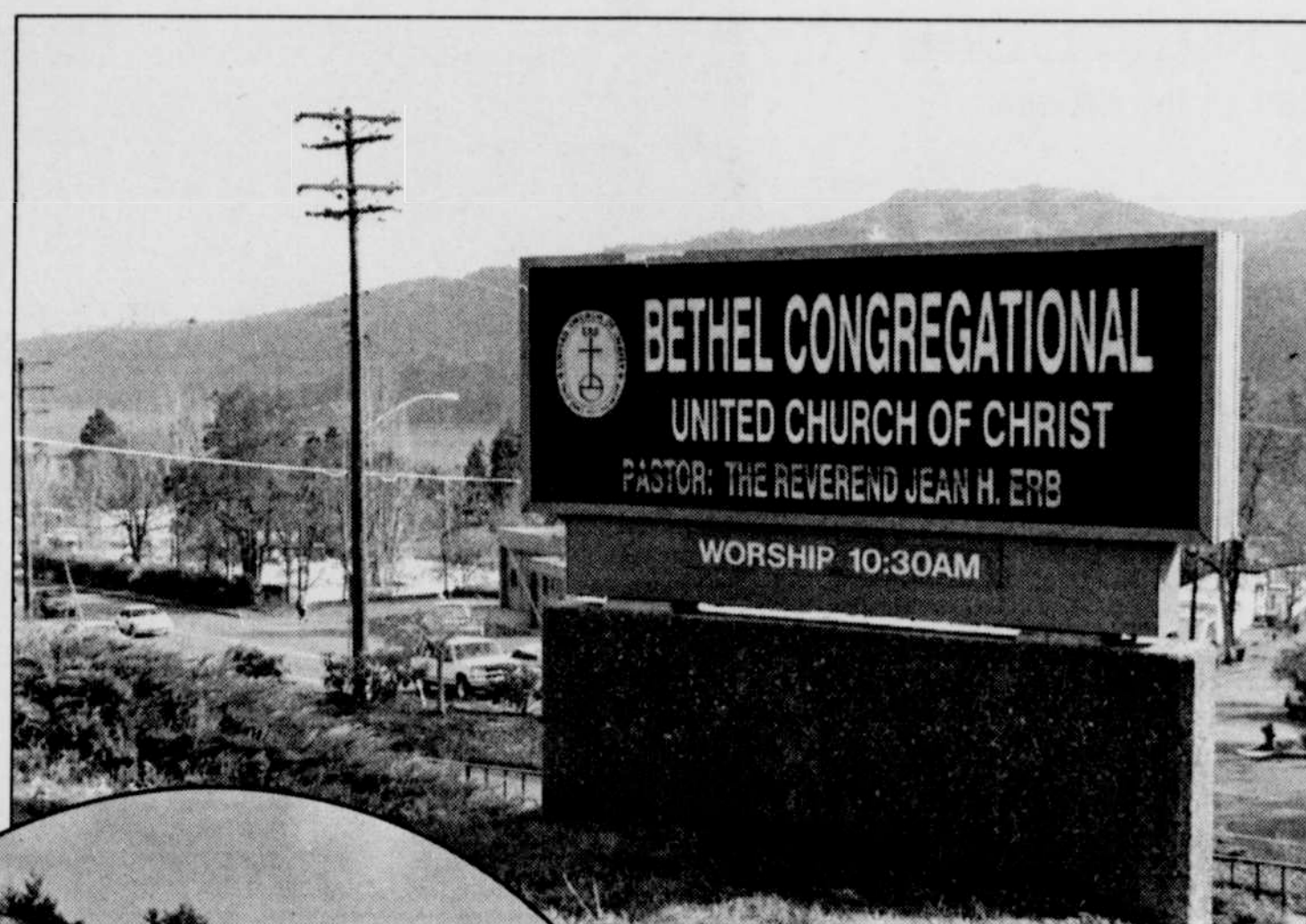
They attend monthly potlucks and meet new people almost every time they show up. Their friends live from one end of the Gorge to the other in other in both Oregon and Washington.

The women also entertain church and community members at the parsonage. Then there is the volunteer work, the community organizing and the community choir, among other activities.

Not to mention the world-famous scenery. Both the church and the women's home have spectacular views of the Columbia Gorge.

Their faces brighten when they talk about the scenery. "One way or another, it is spiritually uplifting," Mann says.

She thinks the beauty of the area contributes to the overall psyche of the people who live in the Gorge. "People seem to be happier, ready to smile," she says. "It affects everything."



Jean Erb (left) and Amy Mann enjoy the spectacular views of the Columbia Gorge

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Having grown up in rural Sherman County, just 40 miles east of Hood River, Shane Langston couldn't wait to live somewhere else. But just after he graduated from college, opportunity—both personally and professionally—was staring him down in his old neighborhood.

A year after he met his partner, Cory Bernard, the men decided to go into business together. They opened Holstein's Coffee Company in The Dalles in 1992. Langston decided "coming home" wouldn't be so bad, because Portland was not so far away.

Almost a decade later, the partners in life and business own four coffeehouses, a coffee roasting company and a truck stop that, all told, gross \$5 million annually. Home base is now in Hood River, a place Langston loves.

"Hood River is definitely an exceptional town. It draws a lot of savvy people. A very educated and accepting community. It's a unique city."

—Shane Langston

"Hood River is definitely an exceptional town," he says. "It draws a lot of savvy people. A very educated and accepting community. It's a unique city." Being gay in the small town isn't an issue. Langston says he never has had a negative reaction.

If people complain, it is because they want him to be more involved in the community. He says his schedule running the businesses and helping manage 142 employees keeps him from being as active as he'd like to be.

Five months of the year are intense with work, Langston says. The area's population explodes during the summer months, when windsurfers and other outdoor enthusiasts flock to the Columbia Gorge. At least twice a month, Langston travels to Bend, where he looks over one of the coffeehouses.

In the off months, he travels around the world. "We are just now getting to the point where we can enjoy being away," he says.

The couple took a leap into the coffee business when they looked around and saw that the small towns in the Gorge didn't have a good place to get a cup of coffee. "We definitely just filled a need," Langston says. "We just kind of went with what we liked." Two additional locations are in the works; Langston is looking at several smaller towns as potential locations.

His success in the coffee business might not just rest with his concept. It just might be the coffee. When they realized they couldn't control the quality of the beans, Langston and

Bernard started Pacific Rim Coffee Roasters, which turns out 700 pounds of beans a week. In addition to providing beans for their own businesses, the company has several customers in Portland.

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