

At Latter-day Saints, service is key

By DAN HINMON
Special to the Keizertimes

When Langdon Smith was a young man growing up in Vermont, he was the only member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in his high school. Today, Smith is bishop of the Clear Lake Ward of the Salt Lake City, Utah-based church and one of 4,600 Latter-day Saints in the Keizer Stake – an ecclesiastical organization similar to a Catholic Diocese – that includes eleven congregations in Keizer, Salem, Silvertown, Woodburn, Brooks, Gervais, Aurora and Donald.



L. Smith

Smith is also a personal injury attorney at Smith Morgan LLP in Salem. Latter-day Saints, who are sometimes known as Mormons, have no paid clergy. Instead, people who are members of the church are asked to fulfill positions within their local ward or stake. Bishop Smith will serve for a few years and then

someone else will be asked to lead the congregation.

Services for the Clear Lake Ward are Sunday at 9 a.m. at 1375 Lockhaven Drive NE. “Most try to wear Sunday best to church,” explained Smith. “There’s singing, organ playing, musical numbers, and sermons by adults and youth. Each week we take the Sacrament in remembrance of the Savior’s sacrifice for us.” Following the one-hour service there are classes for children, youth, men and women.

Church services are family-oriented with children, and sometimes it becomes a bit more irreverent than Smith would like. “Most of all, I hope that it’s a welcoming feeling for people. We try hard to make people feel loved and welcome. That’s really important. If somebody wants to wear jeans and a T-shirt, that’s Okay.”

What is it like to be active in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Matters OF FAITH

The seven square miles of Keizer are home to more than a dozen churches of various religious affiliations. Matters of Faith is a series aiming to explain what makes the city’s places of worship different and unique.

“We have a broad spectrum of folks ranging in age and nationality and political persuasion,” Smith explained. “An active member of the church is somebody who’s imperfect but working towards a greater goal with a hope of better days to come. A component of activity involves going to church services on Sunday, studying the gospel of Jesus Christ in the home on a daily basis through scripture and teachings of church leaders. Another component is community service.”

For example, before the governor’s stay-at-home order, the youth of the ward went to Marion Polk Food

Share to help process food, an opportunity they found on JustServe.org – a website that matches local service opportunities with volunteers. This emphasis on service applies to individuals as well. “I’m a baseball coach,” said Smith. “My wife teaches horse-riding lessons for children with mental and physical disabilities. Along with these, there are larger global involvements that the church takes on, recently donating 45,000 pounds of food to Marion Polk Food Share.”

At the heart of Latter-day Saint teachings is “a belief in Jesus Christ,” Smith explained. “Not only in who He is and what He did here on the earth, but also in what He has taught and how it applies to our lives. We believe strongly in personal action, doing our best, striving for a better day today than yesterday.”

“Having faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of our mistakes, having a change of heart, doing better today than yesterday allows us to prog-



Submitted

Members of the Keizer Stake of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints help pack food at the Marion Polk Food Share.

ress,” he continued. “Then we must be baptized and declare our faith in Christ, love our neighbor, and follow Christ’s teachings. Returning to live with God is only possible through our Savior Jesus Christ. If we are faithful, we will live with Him and with our families for eternity.”

There are some doctrinal differences between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Christian churches, “We believe in a restoration of the original Church of Jesus Christ, and that through that restoration the original authority or priesthood power that was given to Peter from Jesus Christ has been restored on the earth.”

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God, and we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God,” said

Smith. “But I choose to concentrate more on the similarities than I do the differences. The belief in Christ as our Savior unites us.”

If someone is interested in learning more about the church, Smith suggested talking to a member first. “If you have more interest, our missionaries can visit with you,” he added. “Visit our services and get involved in one of our community outreach programs.”

Smith wants his Keizer neighbors to know, “we’re here. We’re here to help, to listen, to lift, to love, to volunteer, and to be part of the community. The world is so filled with goodness, and that goodness is not limited to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We’re here in an attempt to make everyone’s life just a bit better.”

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