

Church: ‘It’s really a sacred place here in our town’

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“I think it’s easier for people to handle things if they have a little bit of ceremony around it somehow,” Ketcham said. “For a lot of people that is; not necessarily everybody.”

‘Shakedown cruises’

Sept. 18 — the fellowship’s first Sunday in the arts center (Franklin Avenue and 16th Street) — will be the first of three Sunday “shakedown cruises” for members to adapt to the new space, a former Lutheran church.

A grand opening service is planned for Oct. 9; the community is invited to be part of the housewarming.

The Unitarian Universalist Association, headquartered in Boston, has Judeo-Christian roots but has shed much of traditional Christian doctrine. It attracts theists, non-theists, atheists and agnostics, espousing principles that embrace science and promote a spiritual humanism.

“Mainline religion is not where we are. We are definitely something different from that,” Ketcham said.

Room to grow

The Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, which rents a space from the First Congregational Church, has known for almost two years that a new site may be needed.

During the last few years, the number of pledging members has increased from about 20 to more than 50, and service participants have increased from about 15 to between 40 and 50 on average, according to Michael Rowe, the fellowship board president.

Though the church can accommodate the current membership, the fellowship believes that won’t be true for long. And the downstairs social hall, where the fellowship hosts religious education classes and other activities for adults and children, can become distractingly crowded, Ketcham said.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian
The Performing Arts Center is located at Franklin Avenue and 16th Street and will be the church’s new home

“We just don’t have room to keep growing, and I think that’s important to consider as a congregation,” Rowe said.

Meanwhile, the building has deteriorated somewhat.

“It’s a lovely little building, and it’s falling apart,” Ketcham said. “It’s really sad.”

Earlier this year, a late-winter storm caused water leakage and damaged a window that boasted a view of Youngs Bay and Saddle Mountain before it was tarped over.

“When the window went last March, that was kind of a real indication to people that we really were going to have to get serious,” Ketcham said.

When members voted by mail, they expressed “a very clear preference for the PAC rather than to stay at the little congregation where we are,” she said.

About 80 percent of pledged members voted; about 66 percent of voters opted to leave. But, as far as Rowe knows, the minority of members who voted to stay will remain in the fellowship.

Ketcham expects the fellowship to continue growing, especially because the arts center is closer to downtown. “We’ll be much more visible,” she said.

“It’s exciting that we’re going to be joining the PAC community,” she said. “I think it’s going to be great for the college and the partners to have our energy.”

A sanctuary worth saving

Some fellowship members are conflicted about the decision.

Nancy Cook, a church member who teaches writing at the college, said the intimacy of the space and the panoramic view of the region remind her of the Unitarian Universalist Association’s seventh principle: “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

“That’s something I’m going to miss,” Cook said. “I feel like, sitting in that sanctuary, you were reminded every Sunday of the beautiful world we live in, (here in) the Lower Columbia.”

Cook, who grew up Unitarian Universalist and regularly takes her daughter, Nizina, 8, to services, said the experience of sitting in the pews and gazing out the window has been almost as important to her as the sermons.

Kathy Matthews, pastor of the First Congregational Church, said there was a time when her congregation felt



The Daily Astorian/File Photo
The stage at Clatsop Community College’s Performing Arts Center.

that, if the fellowship left, the church would have to close.

“But that time has passed,” Matthews said, “and I have told my congregation that we may not make it. But whether they (the fellowship) stay or leave will not be the deciding factor.”

She said that she has very mixed emotions about the fellowship’s decision to leave.

“I will miss them terribly. But their feelings towards the building, and everything about it, changed dramatically when it was damaged,

and so if it means that much to them to be gone, then ... it’s probably time for them to be gone, and I wish them nothing but the best.”

Matthews said she plans to launch a campaign to restore the structure, which was built in 1964 and designed by premier Oregon architect Ebba Wicks. The church’s insurance company has declined to pay for repairs.

Cook said she hopes local preservationists step up to help the church. “It’s really a sacred place here in our town.”

‘A church is a community’

At the same time, Cook said she is excited the fellowship will be joining and supporting the arts center.

A “church is not a building. A church is a community. I will move with them. A real organ and stained glass windows will be cool!” she wrote in a message.

And, she added, because of the arts center’s more central location, Cook and her daughter can walk to church when weather permits.

Pub: Council voted to take no action

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license. A police review documented issues regarding her previous surname and a previous impaired-driving offense. In a response to the police findings, Miltenberger said she did not realize she had not provided all of her names, did not do so intentionally and did not realize the omissions were important.

The police review also highlighted concerns about fights, public intoxication and other disorderly conduct at Workmans Irish Pub in Tillamook.

The City Council voted 3-1 to take no action on Miltenberger’s license.

The building where Miltenberger wants the Irish pub has largely been vacant since Cafe Union-

town stopped operating in 2007. Jim Wilkins, a former city councilor, bought the building in 1992 from Rae Goforth, the late unofficial “Mayor of Uniontown.” She had operated an Irish restaurant called Fiddler’s Green there until 1980. The building went through several short-lived eateries before Goforth opened Cafe Union-

Measure 97: 517 Oregon voters polled

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The measure was placed on the ballot by a petition drive primarily supported by public employee unions. It is opposed by most of

the business community.

“The measure starts with a really positive ballot title and the campaign hasn’t really started, so I think we’ll have much more of a conversation going forward,” says consultant Pat

McCormick, a spokesman for the measure’s opponents.

The telephone poll of 517 Oregon voters was conducted from Sept. 1-6. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.3 percent.

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