

Pope and Congress: Francis is certain to challenge lawmakers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A political pope is sure to seize his opportunity when he addresses a political body. So both Democrats and Republicans are looking forward to Pope Francis’ remarks to Congress next month — and bracing for them, too.

The pope thrills Democrats with his teachings on climate change, social justice and immigration. At the same time, his message on life and the Catholic Church’s traditional opposition to abortion comfort Republicans.

There is genuine giddiness among Catholic Democrats — many of whom have long been uncomfortably at odds with their church over abortion rights — about the pope’s strong emphasis on addressing poverty and the environment.

“I’ve been waiting for this pope all my life,” said liberal Massachusetts Democrat Jim McGovern, 57. “I find him inspirational and I know a lot of other people do, not just Catholics.”

The pope comes to the Capitol on Sept. 24, where he will be the first pontiff to ever address a joint meeting of Congress. He will also appear on a West Front balcony to greet the public.

There’s little doubt that Francis, who in a speech last month in Bolivia spoke out against unchecked capitalism before an assemblage of groups representing the poor, will seek to send a similar message to lawmakers representing the richest nation on earth.

“Whether it’s climate change or hunger or taking care of the poor, the Pope’s message is really the embodiment of what Catholic social teaching has been about, historically,” said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., who traveled to Rome to witness the pope’s installation two years ago.

The pope was, of course, invited by the most powerful Catholic in Congress, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, who will be accompanied by Vice President Joe Biden, another Catholic, in familiar seats behind Francis on the dais. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California, also a Catholic, will occupy a prominent seat on her party’s side of the aisle.

For joint addresses like the State of the Union or even the recent appearance before Congress by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, partisan politics is unavoidable. One side will jump to their feet while the other will sit on their hands. In September, however, most hope and anticipate such grandstanding can be avoided.

“You will not know it’s the Congress,” said Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J.

There’s also no glad-handing the pope as he walks down the center aisle, unlike the annual ritual in which lawmakers such as Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., and Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, commandeer a seat to press the flesh. The pontiff is expected to keep his hands clasped as if in prayer.

A top adviser to Francis visited Washington in April and said the pope will speak “frankly but friendly” in his U.S. trip.

“Even the Congress people can listen to other voices, to counsels, to advisers,” said Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, according to Religion News Service. “The one who receives advice commits less errors and is not mistaken. The one who does not like to listen to advice will have a lot of trouble. So I think the Congress will receive very well the advice (of the pope) — even if there are some things that will not be comfortable.”

Francis’ recent encyclical chastised policymakers across the globe for inaction on the environment as the skies warm and the oceans are ravaged by overfishing and pollution.

“We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth,” the pope wrote. “The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.”

In September, such warnings could be seen as a challenge directed to a Congress populated by GOP skeptics of proposals to reduce greenhouse gases like new curbs on coal-fired power plants.

“You’re always stronger in terms of credibility when you stay closer to your church doctrine and church teaching and also what the Catholic Church has been about,” said Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska. “Many people take a lot of pride, whether you’re Catholic or not, in terms of focus on the poor, focus on helping the most vulnerable.”

Francis, however, is not shy about expanding his reach beyond a traditional role as he leads the church in a rapidly changing century.

“He’s a very different pope. He’s defined himself in a very different way,” said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., another Catholic. “He’s talking about outcomes. We’ve got to work on means.”

The recent encyclical also reiterated the church’s long-time teachings on abortion.

“How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?” Francis wrote.

Whatever the pope’s message, lawmakers in both parties hope it serves as a salve — however temporary — to a body that too often sees issues in black and white and seeks partisan advantage wherever it can be found.

BRIEFLY

Conference focuses on love, respect

IRRIGON — A conference designed to strengthen marriage ties is planned at the Irrigon Seventh-day Adventist Church, 205 Tumbleweed Blvd.

Love and Respect: The Love She Desires, The Respect He Needs will be held on three consecutive Wednesdays, Aug. 19 and 26 and Sept. 2, from 6-8 p.m. at the church’s Family Closet Building. The conference is free, but there is a \$5 charge for the workbook. Participants are asked to plan ahead for childcare, as none will be provided during the conference.

Registration is requested by calling 541-922-3895 or 541-922-3392, via email at irrigon7thdayadventist@yahoo.com, or in person at the Family Closet on Tuesdays.

Duo to perform ‘Light and Life of Christ’

UMATILLA — A familiar face to churches in the area, Sean Rogers — one-half of the Ring Praise Music Ministry — will perform with tenor Stephan Craig.

“The Light and Life of Christ” concert is Sunday, Aug. 23 at 3 p.m. at the Umatilla Presbyterian Church, 14 Martin Drive. There is no admission charge, although a freewill offering will be taken.

Rogers, who plays piano, is a concert artist who is just a comfortable with classical music as he is jazz. At the age of 8, he accepted his first full-time organist position with a church. When he was 12, he began playing weekly as an entertainer in a lounge and restaurant and continued that until he left for college.

Craig tours nationally singing opera, classical and musical theater. He shares his personal testimony and love of music through a heartfelt musical celebration.

For more information, call Norma Bussler at 541-922-5382.

PENDLETON
New pastor in town

By JONATHAN BACH
East Oregonian

Travis Larsen is the kind of guy you can grab coffee with. He has an easy-going manner that makes him a cinch to talk to, and frequently flips the conversation on its head, asking questions in between his own answers.

And that’s probably good, for the line of work in which Larsen finds himself.

For someone who says he could have been a teacher, an engineer (as he says his father would have liked) or even a biologist, he seems to have found a steady rhythm in ministry.

Larsen, 35, joined the Pendleton community as Faith Lutheran Church’s pastor in November of last year. He slings an arm over the top of a wingback chair at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. and chats about the challenges of modern-day preaching, finding his future wife in school and finally telling people about wanting to be a pastor by college.

Larsen grew up a child of the suburbs in Tigard. He said he was wary of telling his brothers he wanted to be in the ministry, but that the profession called to him around age 13. People would mention to him that pastoring would suit him. In high school, he met Katie, the woman he would eventually marry and with whom he now has four children — three boys and a girl.

Katie said they met while trying out for the same school play. “He was just



Staff photo by Jonathan Bach

Pastor Travis Larsen in Peace Lutheran Church Monday afternoon. Larsen began to work at the church in November 2014.

always very confident and silly,” she said.

By college, he started to tell people he wanted to preach. But he said he needed to be sure Christianity was right for him; to test the waters of different faiths. So at Willamette University in Salem, Larsen studied religions of the world.

In the end, he said Lutheranism, the faith of his childhood, “won out.”

After college, he and Katie embarked on a years-long journey that would take them back to Tigard, down to California, up the coast to Newport, then to Sandy and finally, Pendleton.

Larsen doesn’t seem to mind the Pendleton’s small town atmosphere. The nice

thing about preaching in a less populous community is that people know who you are, he said. “Some people chafe under that,” he said. But he said he does not.

Linda Mettes, 67, is an administrative assistant at Peace Lutheran. She said she’s worked around 19 years under nine pastors, most of whom have been older. She notes Larsen’s energy and willingness to bring new ideas to the table.

Larsen’s wife said the sense of community in Pendleton is much more present than it was in Sandy.

Since Larsen came to Eastern Oregon last winter, he said he has been introducing himself to the community and figuring out what matters to Pendleto-

nians most.

The problem with modern-day ministry is that church is no longer an obligation, he said. There are so many things that vie for parents’ attention when they’re choosing what their children should be involved in — most of which ends up being resume builders, he said. He said that makes sense, and one of his main goals is to better connect Peace Lutheran Church to the community.

“We need to be experimenting,” he said.

But that doesn’t deter Larsen from staying the course.

“I get to be with people at their best moments and at their worst moments,” he said.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Worship with us!

PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH 585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868 (541) 443-2500 prbconline.blogspot.com Sunday School: 9:30 am Worship Service: 10:45 am Wednesday Services: Kids' Club: 6:00 pm Youth Group: 7:00 pm	GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS – OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided) Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information 541-289-4535 Tom Inch, Pastor Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA 164 E. Main St. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838	St. Johns Episcopal Church All People Are Welcome <i>Scripture, Tradition and Reason</i> Family service 9am Sunday Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest. PH: 567-6672	Redeemer Episcopal Church 241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809 www.pendletonepiscopal.org Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 a.m. Wednesday Worship Noon Wednesday Evening Prayer and Pot Luck 6:00 p.m. All Are Welcome
Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 Nursery provided for all services Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 10:45 AM 6:00 pm Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM “Proclaiming God’s word, growing in God’s grace”	PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM 712 SW 27th ST. 541-276-1894 www.fcogpendleton.com	FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH -Presbyterian Church (USA)- 201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton Service of Worship - 10:00 am Children’s Sunday School - 10:20 am Fellowship - 11:00 am www.pendletonpresbyterian.com Open Hearted...Open Minded	Come meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH 3202 S.W. Nye Avenue, Pendleton, OR 541-276-7590 Sunday Morning Worship 8:30 & 11:00 AM Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM Awana Kids Club Tuesdays 6:30 - 8:00 PM K - 6th Grade (Sept-May)
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH <i>in Mission for Christ LCMC</i> Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org	Living Word Christian Center Sunday Worship Service 10:00 AM Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 PM Sharon Miller, Pastor 401 Northgate • Pendleton 278-8082 www.livingwordcc.com	The Salvation Army <i>Center for Worship & Service</i> Sunday Worship Service 9:30 - Sunday School 10:30 - Worship Service Wednesday Bible Study 5:30 Family Fellowship Meal 6:00 Bible Study COME AS YOU ARE 150 SE EMIGRANT (541)276-3369	Peace Lutheran Church ELCA 210 NW 9th, Pendleton Join us Sundays 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class ~Come and be at Peace~ on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday
Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30	Faith Center Church Worshipping God • Loving People 108 S. Main • 276-9569 Summer Sunday Worship 10:00 am Wed. 7:00 pm Praise, Prophecy & Prayer Sr. Pastor, Ray O’Grady pendletonfaithcenter.org	FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) 215 N Main • Pendleton Summer Worship begins at 9:40am Office 276-5358 M-F 8:30-12:30 WWW.FCCPENDLETON.ORG	New Hope Community Church <i>Ministries for the entire family</i> 1350 S Hwy 395, Hermiston Sunday Worship Services: 9 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. Classes for kids during both! Call 567-8441 Servicios en Español
<i>a place to belong</i> Pendleton First INVITING ENRICHING INVOLVING EMPOWERING SUNDAY SERVICES AM Celebration-10:00am AM Kids Place -10:00am The Connection--6:00pm Groups for all ages: Adults, Children, Youth, & College Thursdays Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm Celebration Place-6:00pm Other Groups Available Weekly For more info visit WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM 1911 SE Court Ave 541-276-6417 Assembly of God Church	Seventh-Day Adventist Church Saturday Services Pendleton 1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882 Sabbath School 9:20 am Worship Service 10:45 am	THE COUNTRY CHURCH <i>Pastor James Becker</i> 32742 Diagonal RD Hermiston OR 97838 Sunday School 10 am Worship 7 am Evening Service 7 pm Bible Study Wednesdays 7 pm Firestarter Youth Ministry (Ages 12-17) Monday @ 6 pm	To share your worship times call Amanda Jacobs 541-278-2683