

LIMEY PASTOR

The ghosts of Christmas future

I'm hoping that all of you had a Christmas that brought you together with those you love and perhaps had not seen for years and allowed you to please them with your attentiveness and care. Gifts are sacrifices to an idol of earthly things, but your love and your welcome are angelic gifts.

I give thanks for a year where my wife and I both had surgeries and we were both blessed with successful results. I was quite ready to leave this world back in March and had made a contingent peace with the possibility of leaving this good earth. So, I am glad to be here. I must continue to search for all the good things that the Lord has hidden here in this beautiful place. We ourselves are hiding places for the treasures of God and hide within our own fabric his mysteries and possibilities.



COLIN BROWN
Faith

We are his. As I write this I hear the drumming of rain on my roof and feel the temperature warming up — in this I listen to his wonderful work of maintaining our world. For this I give thanks. I pray that this coming year 2018, you may find those hidden places in yourself where Jesus waits to teach you new things. I pray that you will receive forgiveness for all those things that you have done that can only be healed by his knowing forgiveness and compassionate love. All of you receive his forgiveness when you turn to him and repent and ask.

People of Hermiston be blessed in your churches, and find a rich new life this year. Celebrate the invited ones who will be called to your church by the spirit to renew and rejoice. People of Pendleton receive deeper gifts of the Holy Spirit, even greater gifts of hospitality. I know your hospitality well and God will raise up great people of your town to lead the state from your people. Of this I am certain. Someone from East Oregon will be called to serve at a very high level.

I ask that the blessed farmer churches receive blessing and good health, and that all of those who have suffered and hurt this past year will be strengthened and made whole. I pray for good crops and good soil, and pure, clean water abundantly falling in spring and summer rains. I pray for healthy livestock and abundant provisions for the people.

People of The Dalles — and all of Eastern Oregon — I ask that the wealth of new business floods into your town and brings good ideas, rich blessings and amazing prosperity to each and every one of you.

I pray that the Lord himself will be a felt presence in your midst. That wherever your feet may land, Jesus's steps will accompany yours. 2018 will be a year strong in return to honesty and character in the Church, it will be a year of return to moral principle and regeneration. Commitment to unborn children will be felt as God's deep desire and many people will find it in themselves to adopt and foster these little ones.

Jesus is making the way straight and this next year we will know absolutely he is walking beside us and bringing his kingdom of peace to reign here on this sparkling jewel of our world. Be watchful.

He is with us always. Blessings!
Amen.

Colin Brown is the former pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Boardman.

HERMISTON

Youth event locks in New Year's Eve fun

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
East Oregonian

Area youths are invited to a special New Year's Eve event in Hermiston

The Youth Lock-In starts Sunday, Jan. 31 at 7 p.m. at Living Faith Church, 1611 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. While some of the activities take place at the church, transportation in church buses will be utilized for activities at other destinations, including roller skating at Roller Ink and laser tag course will be set up in the gymnasium at Hermiston Christian Center. The event ends Monday, Jan. 1 at 1 a.m.

"We are so thankful to create a safe and fun alternative for the teenagers in our community for New Year's Eve," said David Gutierrez, youth pastor at Living Faith Church.

The fee is \$10 per person, which covers the cost of the activities. The evening includes laser tag, roller skating, pizza, live music and more. Participants will return to Living Faith prior to midnight for some music and an short encouraging New Year's Eve message, Gutierrez said. The event is open to students ages 12-18.



Area youths enjoyed a safe New Year's Eve celebration in 2016. This year's Youth Lock-In event starts Sunday at 7 p.m. at Living Faith Church in Hermiston.

The lock-in started a couple of years ago as an activity for the Living Faith Church's youth group, Gutierrez said. But, as other area youth leaders

saw Facebook postings about the event, they wanted to get involved. Gutierrez said the first year included nine youth pastors/leaders and about 150 teens.

For more information, 541-567-4486 or visit www.winacity.org.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

Episcopal church funds suicide prevention programs

By **ELISE SCHMELZER**
Casper Star-Tribune

CASPER, Wyo. — On a Sunday in September, morning light drifted through stained glass as churchgoers in Rock Springs raised their eyes to God.

In Basin, a congregation joined voices to sing an opening hymn. In Thermopolis, they bowed their heads, opened their hearts and asked for mercy.

Then the prayers — recited in each of those Episcopal churches — became specific.

"God of Mercy, hear our prayer for ourselves, our friends and families who hold painful memories of loss, grief and suicide," the priests read. "We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past."

Not many Christian sects have a service specifically dedicated to suicide prevention. In many churches, suicide is taboo — something to be whispered about over after-service coffee but never mentioned from the pulpit. For some, suicide is a violation of the Fifth Commandment — thou shall not kill. For some, those who die by suicide are damned to hell.

But the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming doesn't condemn those souls. Instead, the 49 parishes across the state are actively attempting to save them. Suicide prevention has been a priority for the Episcopal



In a Dec. 14 photo, light falls on Bibles, hymnals and prayer books inside Saint Mark's Episcopal Church in Casper, Wyo.

church in Wyoming for years. But after state lawmakers drastically cut funding for prevention earlier this year, the church's efforts further intensified.

It's an obligation, Bishop John Smylie said, especially in a state that consistently has one of the highest rates of suicide.

"It's become the moral priority for the diocese," he said.

In 2016, more than 130 people died by suicide in Wyoming. In 2015, the most recent year for which national data is available, the state had the highest rate of suicide in the nation — 28 deaths by suicide for every 100,000 residents. Wyoming consistently ranks in the top five states with the highest rates.

After lawmakers cut suicide prevention funding this year, the diocese pledged \$100,000 for local churches to use toward that aim. Parishes across the state have held trainings and recruited speakers.

But Smylie wants one thing to be clear: This was a one-time gift. It's the job of the Legislature to fund suicide prevention and awareness, not the diocese's, he said.

"I don't understand the thinking of the legislators and how they can choose not to care about this profound crisis," he said. "This is their responsibility."

During the 2017 legislative session, lawmakers voted to cut \$2.1 million from the Wyoming

Health Department's \$5.7 million budget for suicide and substance abuse prevention.

That cut has deeply affected the Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming, the nonprofit that the state contracts with to provide prevention services.

The organization no longer has the money needed for informational campaigns, training materials or prevention efforts focused on specific at-risk communities and is only able to facilitate suicide intervention trainings with the help of the Episcopal diocese.

Local PMO staff partner with the Episcopal church in their area and request funding from the diocese's foundation. The nonprofit can provide the trainer, but money for materials and space now comes from the church.

"It's possible we would've been able to do intermittent training," said CEO Keith Hotle. "But eventually that would've dwindled away all together."

"It really was a saving grace. A blessing."

The Episcopal diocese first started working with the PMO on suicide prevention in 2014, but the relationship became more formal after lawmakers cut the budget. In July, the bishop sent a letter to legislators and the governor condemning the cuts.

BAHA'I FAITH IN PENDLETON

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Colin Brown, Pastor

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