

Diverging values lead to Mormon retreat from Scouts

By **BRADY MCCOMBS**
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — For more than a century, the Boy Scouts of America and the Mormon church formed an ideal pair as they helped each other expand their organizations and build their brands while molding countless young men through bow knots, pinewood derby races and campsouts.

But as the calendar flipped to the 21st Century, the longtime partners originally drawn to each other by shared values began drifting apart. The Mormon church continued expanding into far-off countries where Boy Scouts wasn't offered and began eyeing its own program. Amid declining membership, Boy Scouts of America recently opened its arms to openly gay youth members and adult volunteers, transgender boys, and girls while the Mormon religion clung to its opposition of homosexuality and stuck to its traditional gender roles.

On Tuesday, the two sides announced what had become inevitable: They will split permanently starting in 2020.

The memories will live on in Norman Rockwell paintings, the Boy Scouts training complex named after a former Mormon church president and in the pictures from the church's 2013 extravagant theatrical production commemorating their 100th anniversary together.

But, their futures are now headed in divergent directions.

The Boy Scouts will try to make up for the loss of its largest sponsor through the addition of girls and a welcoming message that all are invited. Last week, the organization said it will change the name of its flagship program next year to Scouts BSA to account for the inclusion of girls.

The organization says its current



AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File

Twenty-three original, Boy Scout-themed Norman Rockwell paintings were on display in Salt Lake City to celebrate the 100-year relationship between Scouting and the Mormon church.

youth participation is about 2.3 million, down from 2.6 million in 2013 and more than 4 million in peak years of the past. So far, nearly 4,000 girls have joined roughly 170 Cub Scout packs participating in the first phase of the new policy, and the pace is expected to intensify this summer under a nationwide multimedia recruitment campaign.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will bank on nurturing its youth in a still-to-be developed program set to launch in 2020 that will likely include outdoor activities and character building similar to Boy Scouts but be tailored for the church's doctrine and designed to roll out around the globe.

Unhitching from Boy Scouts will trigger nostalgia for American Mormons who grew up aiming for the important life milestone of Eagle Scout, said Mormon scholar Patrick Mason, professor of religion at Claremont Graduate University in California. Mason, who is Mormon, said his mother told him and his three

brothers they couldn't get their driver's license until they earned Eagle Scout.

Joining the Boy Scouts is practically automatic among Mormon boys, and the religion has long been the biggest sponsor of Boy Scout troops in the United States. The 425,000 Mormon boys who will be leaving represent about 18.5 percent of youth in the Boy Scouts. Another 185,000 Mormon boys ages of 14 and 18 already left the Boy Scouts this year to focus on church-related activities and community service.

Mason said the time had clearly come for a split — with the Boy Scouts following shifting American culture that no longer matched church's core principles. The Mormon church, which opposes gay marriage and considers homosexual relationships a sin, initially said it was "deeply troubled" by the Boy Scouts' 2015 policy change on gays but stayed after receiving assurances it could appoint troop leaders according to its own religious values.

FAITH BRIEFLY

Christian writers host one-day conference

EUGENE — Terry Glaspey, an acquisitions editor for Harvest House Publishers and author of more than a dozen books, is the keynote speaker during the Oregon Christian Writers Spring Conference.

Open to writers of all genres and levels, the event is Saturday, May 19 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church, 3550 Fox Meadow Road, Eugene. Glaspey will share on the topic, "A Cloud of Creative Witnesses," which explores ways people can bring Christianity to life through

their talents. In 2017, he received a Christianity Today Book Award and a Gold Medallion Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association for "75 Masterpieces Every Christian Should Know."

Presented by various authors, workshop topics include fine-tuning manuscripts, writing for laughter, character development in fiction writing and how to write short pieces for big rewards. The registration fee is \$20-\$75. For more information or to register, visit www.oregonchristianwriters.org. For questions, contact business@oregonchristianwriters.org.

Nazarene church hosts yard sale

HERMISTON — Bargains can be found during a fundraising yard sale at Hermiston Church of the Nazarene.

Members of the church have been soliciting items for the event and have had a positive response from the community. The yard sale is Saturday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the church, 1520 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. Money raised will be used by the missions team for projects and trips.

For more information, call 541-567-3677 or visit www.hermiston-nazarene.org.

LIMEY PASTOR

The Amanda Network

As part of my seminary education, besides the church work, I also trained as a chaplain. I served that training in Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center Main Campus down in San Jose, northern California. It was a huge building and campus with a neonatal intensive care unit, a pediatric wing and a treatment center for all manner of ailments. The pediatric wing was always the most intense environment for me — awesome and scary as all beginnings are.

I would go to the hospital on Fridays and come back on Saturday night, so I could be ready for my training in the church on Sunday. Here, in this most challenging of environments, I would comfort those sick and dying, be with family members in the most difficult of circumstances, counsel those who were looking for hope and healing in their process and reflecting on where God was in all of this.

On one occasion I guarded the body of a man who had fallen and died in a patient waiting room while waiting for his post-operative checkup. The nurses moved his body to an office and parked him on top of a desk while I waited with him for people to come and collect him and take him down to the morgue. That was a strange and sad experience. He was frozen in rigor mortis with his mouth open in a half scream. He was an elderly man and apparently by himself. So I was his escort on part of his farewell journey.

For me, at night, I was only in a half trance, waiting for the sound of a Code Blue to be called, when life began to leave a person or seem like it was. I slept in my clothes on an armchair. It was a strange hypnotic ride, waiting for death to call, or the call of nurses announcing a life flight arriving with a helicopter and somebody in deep trouble coming down from heaven's passage.

In the corridors you could round a corner and suddenly find yourself in an existential challenge that you were the apparent expert in. On my very first time I remember going to the room of a Down's Syndrome man and working with a family that was faced with ending the young man's life support. The young man's organs were so compromised that any further intervention would have been a form of torture.

I could speak for God and assure his family that God was



COLIN BROWN
Faith

ready to receive him and God would welcome him with the open arms of the Father. I was certain of this, and the Spirit allowed me to provide that certainty to his family. It was profoundly sad, but profoundly kind also and I knew that God was right in that room with us. No theoretical belief, but real certainty.

It was here in this hospital that I met the 16-year-old girl Amanda Brownell. Amanda had been a victim of intensive bullying at her high school. It had been personal, one on one, by text and email, by internet boards and had made her life a living hell. She tied a rope to the top of a door at school and attempted to hang herself. She had not been discovered for a while. She almost killed herself. A huge absence of life-giving oxygen killed a great deal of her brain.

When I met with her family, I was extraordinarily touched by their plight, and over the weeks I met with them listening to the elaboration of Amanda's bullying at school. I found that God had equipped me with material, of my own abuse by bullies that had occurred when I was younger, and of my own strokes I had been afflicted with in the past. The good Lord had given me a taste of suffering that allowed me to enter a little into the suffering of others. Funny how that happened.

I recommended the book "My Stroke of Insight" by the brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D. She had lost a hemisphere due to a stroke and was able to rebuild much of what she had had. Her family read it and was inspired to keep working with Amanda, working with her doctors and therapists, to regain a very limited function and communication, but a communication nonetheless.

I shared with them the possibility that some good may come for others out of the creation of a charity for children in the grip of bullies. The Brownell family created the Amanda Network Anti-Bullying Campaign, which exists to support anti-bullying efforts everywhere. Search for it on Facebook.

Amanda has passed on now, but her spirit lives and God loves her very much.

May God bless the Brownell Family and all of you who are being bullied.

May Christ's angels defend you and your family. Amen.

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

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Colin Brown, Pastor

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