

Church hopes boughs can help repair bells



CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Completed boughs made from a 100-year-old holly bush owned by the church line chairs at the London Grange. Funds raised from the sale of the handmade wreaths will go toward repairing the Church at London's 159-year-old bells.

By Caitlyn May
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Hope travels south from Cottage Grove.

It rides the sways and swerves of the road that stretches passed Sixth Street and the railroad crossing; beyond the quaint din of downtown Main Street to where houses — not businesses — dot the spaces between old fir trees.

It hugs London Road into the rural stillness until it finally settles in the hearts of the ladies of the Church at

London.

It's not a big church; just 20 or so parishioners. It's where the pews accommodate just one or two worshippers each and where they still hand-make the confirmation bread. It's where members mark their pews with blankets the night before service and where some of those blankets mark the seats of those who have left the church to settle in the salvation they once sought there.

It's where preachers prefer to be called teachers and

where the fence was painted by practiced hands and where, for the first time in decades, the bells no longer ring.

"Well, this whole thing is her fault," said Sandy Tullar. She's part of the small group of women gathered at the London Grange, just down the street from the Church at London. They have a sort of assembly line in place where holly from a 100-year-old bush is paired with greenery and donated decorations to become Christmas wreaths. "She got us started on this," Tullar said.

"She" is Gretchen Spears and "this" is an all-out effort to save the 159-year-old bell tower at the Church at London.

The church, first founded just after the Civil War in 1888 as the Liberty Church, was undergoing repairs earlier this year when the congregation discovered the problem.

"They told us, the worker, told us not to ring the bell because someone could get hurt," Spears said. The bell had already been silenced after parishioners discovered that, if they rang it, dead flies would come tumbling into their sanctuary.

"The flies were attracted to the bell because of the rot," Spears said.

The estimate to repair the bell totaled between \$4,000 and \$6,000 — funds the church didn't have. So, the bell lay silent and the con-

gregation continued its repairs. Until Spears got a call from Tullar.

She had been painting the fence one day when she says her age and a holly bush stopped her from going any farther.

"Sandy called me and said she couldn't squeeze past the holly bush so we went out there to cut it and I saw it and just said, 'this is gold,'" Spears said.

The holly was from a 100-year-old bush the group hopes will stretch into enough wreaths to raise the thousands of dollars it needs to repair its bell.

With hope in their hearts, they've gathered every day — seven hours a day — for the last two weeks in the meeting room at the London grange, where they twist and tie greenery and holly together, their fingertips blackened with the effort.

This past Saturday they lined a festival booth at Shady Oaks with their wreaths hoping to garner additional funds.

"We painted the church white," Spears said of the group's repair efforts. "It's been a place for marriages and baptisms and funerals and we painted it white because we wanted it to look shining and welcoming and to hear that bell ring again."

To purchase a wreath or donate to the bell's repair fund, contact Spears at 541-844-6616 or email her at gretchenspears@msn.com.



Pet tips 'N' tales

By Mary Ellen
"Angel Scribe"

A 'Precious' Miracle

When Heather's marriage ended she declared to God, "Phooey! I am done with men! Send me a dog!"

Shortly after, at a Christmas gathering, she met an Australian Shepherd and fell in love with the breed. She put a photo of herself with the Aussie on her car's sun visor and asked in prayer for one.

She volunteered at the SPCA and saw hundreds of dogs. Inexplicably, she never saw one with a pinch of Aussie in it. She also scanned newspaper ads and the Internet for "her dog." She wondered, *What is up?* because she never saw "her" Aussie rescue.

After two years, she looked at the faded photo on her visor, removed it and angrily tore it up. As she tossed the remains into the air, she looked heavenward and declared, "Phooey on you, too! Two years I've been waiting. *Praying.* And nothing!"

For the first time in her life she began doubting her faith.

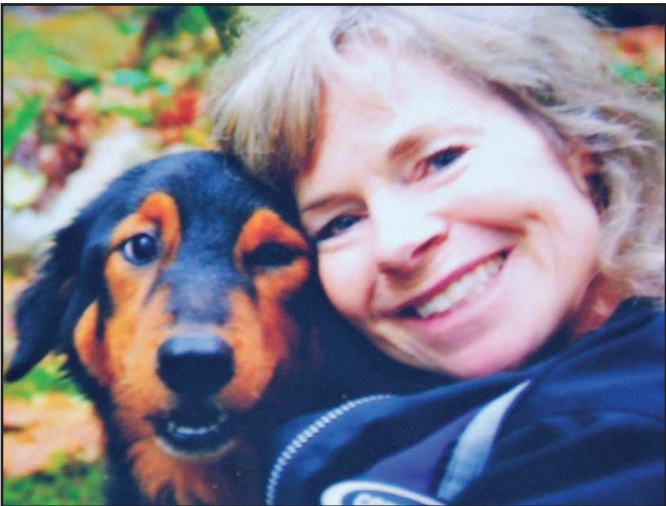
A few days later, while on the phone with her friend, Heather told Kim about the faded photo incident. Kim declared, "We've been looking for a home for an Aussie, 'Precious,' for months now! She's been breaking *into* our yard. My husband was incensed at watching our vicious neighbor beating Precious. So one day he marched over to the abuser and demanded, 'I am sick of you beating your dog in front of us. Give it to me now.' The abuser threw the dog and her leash at him."

Heather immediately hung up and drove to Kim's home for "her" dog.

A few months later, Heather's new cleaning lady, June, asked, "Where did you get that dog? She sure looks like the dog I rescued in Tampa before we moved here to Key West."

The next week, June arrived with Heather's dog's baby photos. How was this possible? June had moved from 450 miles away! Im-paws-ible!

What miracle led June to walk into the very home, in a city of 27,000 people, of the people who had also rescued her once



It is a miracle to be rescued once, but Heather's dog, Precious, was rescued three times.

rescued puppy.

"I was driving in Tampa and saw a nasty bugger, in a pickup truck, toss a puppy out onto the six-lane freeway," said June. "I slammed on my breaks, ran over and rescued the animal."

June named the injured baby, Precious. After a hurricane forced her family to move, her new landlord would not let them keep the dog. Sadly, unknowingly, in her innocence she gave the young dog to the abuser.

What is lacking in someone's mind and heart to beat and terrorize sweet innocence!? The puppy, now grown, still cowers when she rides in Heather's pickup truck — but not in her car.

Heather eventually moved to Canada and Precious, who was born on the east coast, did what most people never do — she had lived in two countries and swam in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Precious trained and became an amazing therapy dog. She uplifted children at elementary schools while they read and offered compassion and comfort to seniors in care homes. She loved people and they loved her. She earned medals for her hours of volunteering dedication and received a letter of acknowledgment from Queen Elizabeth in gratitude for her services.

"Precious taught many of us about love, patience, faith, trust, friendship, faith in a higher Power and in life's amazing coincidences," said Heather.

Who was luckier for finding each other? Heather or Precious? Paws-ibly Heather, because after she divorced a "dog" and found her true love.

TIPS:

- Animals are not dumb. Treat their spirits, hearts and bodies with respect. They have feelings and feel physical pain just like us.
- Never underestimate a dog's intelligence or depth of their heart and understanding of humans.
- Precious knew commands in English, German, French and Italian. Even though she held memories of her early abuse, her forgiveness and love for others left over 1,000 people mourning her upon her passing. Very few humans leave a legacy like Precious a three-time rescued dog! In her honor, consider having your pet become a service animal.

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NOTICE OF CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION VACANCIES

The City of Cottage Grove Historic Landmarks Commission has two vacancies. Commissioners are appointed to this volunteer body by the City Council for three year terms (2019-2021). Applicants must show a demonstrated positive interest, knowledge or competence in historic preservation, and must complete a Historic Landmarks Commission application (available at the Public Works & Development Department at City Hall and on-line at www.cottagegrove.org). Incumbents are eligible to apply for these positions. The deadline for receiving applications is **January 2, 2019 by 5:00 p.m.** For further information please contact the Public Works & Development Department at 541-942-3340.

6-day weather forecast

THURSDAY 52° 41° Partly Cloudy	FRIDAY 44° 38° Rain
SATURDAY 46° 43° Cloudy	SUNDAY 47° 42° Rain
MONDAY 50° 44° Rain	TUESDAY 49° 43° Rain

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