

Community Counseling to provide Frontline Program

In an effort to provide support during the current COVID pandemic, Community Counseling Solutions has announced a pilot program offering free counseling services to medical workers and first responders who live or work in the counties of Morrow, Wheeler, Grant and Gilliam.

The Frontline Program provides up to four free counseling sessions. There is no lengthy assessment and no diagnosis required. The Frontline Program is based on the idea of offering brief supportive therapy. If further referrals or more in-depth treatment is

desired, the clinician will work to make those connections.

Employees of any clinic or hospital, firefighters, emergency medical responders, law enforcement officers and dispatchers all qualify. This program is open to all volunteers or paid staff. To access, call one of the offices and ask for the Frontline Program. Office phone numbers are Boardman Office – 541-481-2911; Heppner Office – 541-676-2961; John Day – 541-575-1466; Condon Office – 541-384-2666; and Fossil Office – 541-763-2746.

COUNTY COVID ISSUES

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is probably forthcoming,” she added. Commissioner Don Russell said it was probably up to the business owner to inform people of the health benefit to wearing a mask, and he urged businesses to tell people “It’s the governor not us” making the requirement. Business owners are not expected to “wrestle them and get them out of there and then call the police on them,” Russell added.

In an earlier public statement released in May, Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack said county law enforcement is following the safety recommendations of the Governor’s executive orders but is not taking law enforcement action against businesses. “The Sheriff’s Office may warn and educate but we should not be the agency that is primarily responsible for closing businesses,” he said at the time.

With the mention of state agencies doing enforcement, however, it was inferred businesses with licenses issued by those agencies could be in jeopardy of losing their license for not enforcing the mandate. Directions from the state are unclear and commissioners also lamented the short notice the governor gave when issuing the mask mandate. “You can’t throw this out one day ahead of time that it goes into effect tomorrow, without informing your local public health authority or giving us education and enforcement processes you want us to follow,” Lindsay said.

Request to stay in Phase II

In other action, the county’s Coronavirus

Emergency Operations Team Monday sent a letter to Governor Brown requesting that the county be left in phase two and not moved back to the more restrictive phase one. Brown recently put the county on a watch list of eight counties that have shown “alarming levels” of COVID-19 increase. The counties include Jefferson, Lake, Lincoln, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wasco. The state says data from the Oregon Health Authority shows that the number of cases per capita in these counties has increased significantly, so now Morrow County officials are worried the governor may shut the county down again through increased restrictions. Morrow County is now reporting 107 positive cases, with the increases mostly in the north end of the county. Boardman reports 52 and Irrigon has 49.

The letter to Brown said Morrow County continues to do “amazing work with our COVID-19 efforts,” and outlined all the county is doing to fight COVID-19, concluding with: “Morrow County has been successful in following the protocols and guidance of OHA and the CDC (Center for Disease Control) to keep positive cases low. Increased testing, contact tracing and efforts in our agricultural sectors have been successful in locating positive cases and isolating those at-risk promptly. Our aggressive approach has led to increased numbers but should be recognized in its proactiveness. We want to use partnering and not punishing to keep our businesses and delicate infrastructure of our main street stores open.

Ione Community Church to hold outdoor worship

The Ione Community Church Council, at their meeting held Monday, June 29 via Zoom, approved a new Covid-19 plan and policy that will provide in person worship for those who would like to attend.

For more than three months, the building has been closed and worship has been provided online. Moving forward, the council approved a plan to continue online worship for those who do not yet feel safe with “in person” gatherings. In addition, an outdoor worship service will be held at 10 a.m. at the Ione City Park. It is the aim of the church to provide worship experiences that meet the needs of everyone who wishes to participate.

As was stated in the opening paragraphs of this policy: “Our Church, as a community of faith, has always been ‘open’ - as God provides love, grace and hope to each of us where ever we are, or however we gather to worship. We always remain ‘the church’ as we extend love, care, communication and hope to each other and those around us. Keeping this in mind, and acting in Christian love, the following policies have been adopted, as we consider returning to in-person worship together.”

To accomplish these aims the plan has three main areas of emphasis:

-In order to provide a more accessible online experience, the church has hired Steve and Renee Allen of Big Horn Press in Condon, to design a new church website. In addition, they are installing a new computer, camera, and monitor set-up to allow live

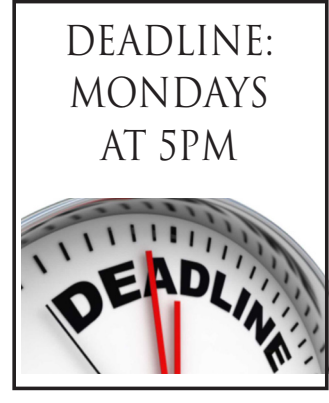
streaming of the services. Anyone wishing to view the service will be able to go to the website and click on a link. The service may be watched live at the time of worship or it will be available to watch at any later time. It is hoped that this service will be available both at the outside service and later when worship begins in the sanctuary.

-Worship will be held each Sunday in July and August at 10 a.m. in the Ione City Park. Worshipers are asked to please bring their own chairs and their own simple elements, if they wish to participate in communion. Also, everyone is asked to respect the social distancing guidelines of six-12 feet between family groupings. Children are welcome always but must stay with their family. We encourage everyone to be respectful of distancing from other groups while finding a space and leaving. Singing in the park will be limited to one person who may provide music for others.

-At this time, it is planned to begin worship in the sanctuary at 11 a.m. in September. All will be asked to wear a mask. Further updates will be provided later. It is planned to resume children’s Sunday School on Wednesdays in September, outside or in the Fireside Room. Additionally, the Council approved a detailed cleaning checklist for appropriate cleaning of all touch surfaces following each use of the building. Current information says that virus transfer will be significantly reduced after 72 hours of use, so the intent is to leave this type of space between each use of our facilities.

The Ione Community Church has always been welcoming in sharing its space with other organizations. Therefore, it is with regret that the Council decided that the church building will be unavailable for non-church organizations and activities and the building will be locked between uses of the congregation. This is only during these difficult times of virus transmission. It is hoped that the day will come when this policy can be rescinded.

Ione Community Church welcomes everyone to participate in person or online in worship with their community of faith. Every effort is being made to make this a safe and meaningful experience. It is hoped that no one will consider these policies a burden, but rather a chance to lovingly care for and protect others. As the apostle Paul told the Galatians (6:9-10) “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially those who are the household of faith.”



“Again, we request you allow Morrow County to remain in Phase II Reopening and ask that we be given the opportunity to discuss this matter with you directly, in detail, before action is taken otherwise.”

The letter was signed by the County’s Emergency Response Team members, Melissa Lindsay, chair of the Board of Commissioners, Diane Kilkenny, Public Health Interim Director and John Bowles Emergency Manager.

Come to me and learn from me

By Father Thankachan Joseph, St. Patrick Church

Last Sunday’s readings welcome everyone to unload worries and overburdens at the feet of the Lord. He invites every one of us to have the rest He provides. At times we all find life difficult. We become overburdened with problems and worries, especially now when the whole world is in the grip of COVID-19. Many are anxious, frightened, jobless, quarantining in their homes. We often use these situations as a reason not to turn to Christ. In today’s Gospel, however, Christ tells us to bring all our burdens to Him and He will give us comfort, peace and strength. Let us pay attention to his loving invitation to go to him with love and trust.

The first reading is from the Book of Zachariah who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world at the age of 21 and was known to be brash and arrogant. In sharp contrast to this emperor, Zachariah sees true greatness in the Messiah, the King, who would be mindful of the lowly. Whereas Alexander and the last kings of Judah would ride on chariots and horses, using their bows and arrows and instruments of power, the Savior, Christ, would come on a donkey, not to signify humiliation but humility, serenity and peaceful intentions. His era would be not one of force but one of peace established through justice, especially for the oppressed. We are constantly confronted, at the business as well as individual level, by the choice of two opposing lifestyles: one built on the exercise of power, domination, violence, manipulation and aggression leading to an unstable impression of peace, or one founded on justice, mutual respect, reverence for life, gentleness and compassion leading towards lasting peace.

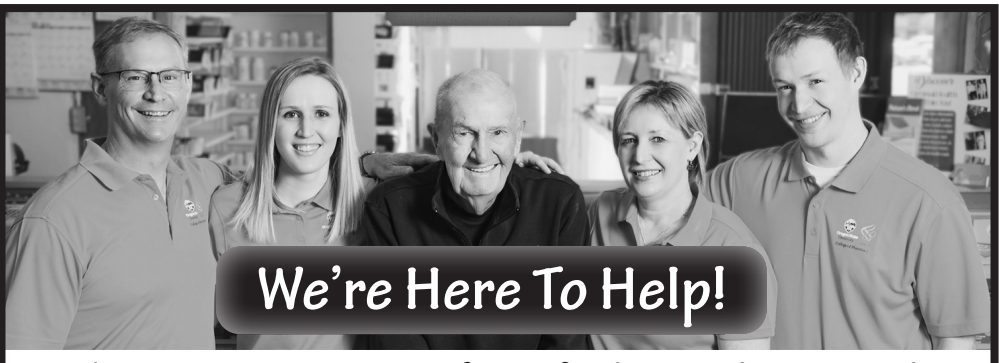
In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us of our choices, the dilemma of living according to the promptings of the flesh or the inspirations of the Spirit. “Brothers and sisters: you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in spirit, if only the spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8: 9). At the center of the “flesh” principle is power and pride ending in spiritual suicide, while the Spirit-filled life is lived in humility and gentleness leading to life in all its fullness. To experience this humility, Jesus invites all to take up His yoke, which is meek and humble, in the Gospel of Mathew.

The Gospel of the day offers two invitations: 1) Come to me. 2) Take My Yoke and learn from Me. The Lord welcomes and invites everyone who is burdened, exhausted, despairing and those who are about to stop and collapse due to their daily routines. This burden could be the burden of responsibility that comes from being a leader, a parent or teacher, one in charge of others. Then there is the burden that comes from being sick, handicapped, widowed, divorced; the burden of coping with losses – job losses, loss of a relationship, loss of emotional support. We may also be weary from too much attraction to pleasures of the flesh and the guilty feelings from that. Maybe we are not sincere with parents, or spouses. And there is the burden that sometimes we carry as we look after others - for instance, care of an aged relative for the terminally ill, care of the handicapped or slow learners. Now days we are really tired from the spread of the coronavirus and the fear it creates. No matter what, the weariness that we feel, no matter how heavy the burden we are carrying, Jesus invites us to come to him. “Come to me all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.”

We need to notice the fact that Jesus does not say “I will get rid of all that is burdening you.” Rather, He says, “Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light” (Mathew 11:30). In the time of Jesus, many people found the law itself was burdensome and religion far from uplifting. Today, as well, some people seem to find religion burdensome and oppressive, so they have given up on religion and on God, but that does not seem to have freed them of the burden they are carrying within.

In the Gospel of John, we read, “Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give to you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you” (John 14:27). At times when I face difficulties, worries of all types, when I face that I am about to stop and to fall down, where do I turn for help? I have seen people going to the mountains, basketball courts, golf courses, going with their friends to eat, drink and make merry, searching for respite from their anxiety, sometimes under the influence of intoxicants. At such times, the Lord is calling us to Him, “Come to me. Shoulder my yoke...” instead of rushing to man-made things and friends.

Life is not that hard after all, when we trust in God and trust only in Him. For only in the Lord can we truly find rest. Only when we come to Jesus will we find true freedom from all that oppresses us. Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon our shoulders. If we discover Jesus in every burden, in every yoke that is placed on our shoulders then we will find the burden light and the yoke easy to bear, for love makes every burden light. As Jesus said, in the midst of suffering and pain, we follow the Lord and take the yoke and learn from Him. Our lives will be light and easy because we keep His word and live by it. When we follow the Lord, life will be lighter because His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.



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