

# Lexington council candidates speak out

**By Bobbi Gordon**

Two candidates who are on the ballot for the town of Lexington responded to the questions sent to them about their candidacy. Current mayor Juli Kennedy and current council member Will Lemmon answered with the following responses.

**Candidate for Lexington Mayor, Juli A. Kennedy**

*Age: 54  
What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position?*

General education with emphasis on business.

*What, if any, prior experience do you have?*

Currently holding the position of Mayor of the Town of Lexington.

*Do you have family here? Spouse? Children?*

Husband, Sid Kennedy. Daughter in Heppner and a daughter in Hermiston. Both grew up in the Heppner area.

*Why are you running for a town/city office?*

I want to continue to make a difference in this community. It is a great place to live and has such wonderful potential. We have made great progress in this town and I am excited about the future of our community.

*What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in your city?*

I think one of the biggest challenges in this town is getting residents involved and to establish better confidence in the local government. Another issue we have faced is turnover.

*How would you address that challenge if you win?*

We have made great progress but have room to grow. Meetings are more productive than in the past and I hope that this continues. Honesty, professionalism and respect for others are key to establish positive working relationships. As far as the turnover, I feel it is crucial to establish documented policies and protocols that will ensure smooth transitions when turnover is experienced.

*Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the job?*

I feel that I have made

a difference with the assistance of a great council. I am committed to seeing our town excel and to be recognized for positive changes. I take this position seriously and I know that there are more great things in store for us. We all have differences in opinions but I know that I can continue to respect those and work together to resolve any issues.

**Candidate for Lexington council member, Will Lemmon**

*Age: 49  
What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position?*

My education is 49 years of life as an American citizen and 13 as a citizen of Lexington.

*What, if any, prior experience do you have?*

I have served two previous terms as a town council member for the Town of Lexington.

*Do you have family here? Spouse? Children?*

My wife and I live in Lexington. We raised our children in Lexington for the last 13 years. Our children are now adults, living in Heppner, Hermiston and La Grande.

*Why are you running for a town/city office?*

To be involved in what is happening in my town and help to make it a better community.

*What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in your city?*

From talking to the residents of Lexington over the years, our old and outdated water system, which has been improved in the last few years, still needs improvement.

*How would you address that challenge if you win?*

With the diligent effort and hard work of my fellow council members, our mayor and our employees, we will be working on grants to improve our water system to continue providing clean, safe water to our residents.

*Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the job?*

I believe I am the only candidate on the ballot. I will serve to the best of my ability for the Town of Lexington and all who reside here.

# Love God above everything else

**By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church**

What is "love"? How would you define it? The English word "love" has many different meanings. If you were to do a web search on the word "love," you might find at least 54,700,000 sites. When we look at it Biblically, we can think of four types of love: Storge = empathy bond; Philia = friend bond; Eros = romantic love; Agape = unconditional love, God's love. Today love is the subject of countless films, and the Beatles popularized the song "All You Need Is Love." What is the love we are talking about here? Is it that nice warm sentimental feeling, or is it more than that? Is there one love that is the greatest of all? May His word open our minds and hearts to Agape, the unconditional love of God.

The book of Exodus (22:20-26) reminds the readers of their obligations towards others, especially to the widows, the strangers, and the orphans – namely, the weak and helpless people. The time of the exile was definitely a very painful and dark part of the history of the people of Israel, during which they experienced what it meant to be weak and dependent on others, as they were strangers journeying to the Promised Land. Times improved, but they were asked not to forget what they themselves had undergone and to be sensitive to the needs of the foreigners among them, the homeless, the helpless and the dependent. They must not oppress the stranger because they were strangers once. They must plead the cause of the underprivileged because they were underprivileged themselves. Having felt the pain of injustice and oppression themselves, they must never inflict pain on others. The health of a community can be measured by the way it treats such people.

St. Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians (1:5-10), is full of appreciation and praise for the believers in Thessalonica because of the way they have received the good news and incorporated it into their lives. He is happy that they have imbibed the faith through the good example of the way he himself has lived in their midst. He continues praising them because they themselves have spread the good news and become a good example attracting others to the faith. Faith is not taught but caught by the inspiring way it is lived.

In today's Gospel the Pharisees confront Jesus with a question concerning the law: "What is the greatest commandment?" Was there one in particular which was the key to all the others? The question was asked not for the sake of obtaining knowledge but as a point of argument. Even today many people love to debate religious topics just for the sake of debate. In Jesus's day the Pharisees spent endless hours debating about the greatest law. Jesus refused to enter into debate. He cut it short by pointing out that laws and religious sermons meant nothing if they

did not lead to love of God and neighbor. There was only one law, one precept that had to be observed: love of God and love of neighbor. These were not new precepts. But Jesus emphasized the connection between the two as no one had ever done before: You cannot have one without the other. The love of God, whom we cannot see, is bogus if it is not expressed in love of people whom we do see. And love of people is incomplete unless it is infused by love of God. C. H. Dodd states, "To love God is to live as His child; to live as a child of God is to treat your neighbor as God treats you."

To describe the above idea, I recall the life story of Father Damien. Father Damien: The Leper Priest is a movie made for television in which Ken Howard plays the lead role. The program dramatizes the story of Fr. Damien, who came from Belgium to the Hawaiian island of Molokai in 1873 to serve the lepers there until he too contracted leprosy and died in 1889. At that time, the colony of Molokai was a dumping ground for lepers, and it was like a death sentence to be put there. There was little law and order, medical help and supplies were nonexistent, and housing and sanitation were so bad that the island seemed like a sewer. At first Fr. Damien found the lepers repulsive. But he suffered with them, struggled with them, and served them; he overcame his revulsion towards the lepers and developed deep feelings of love for them. Fr. Damien dedicated almost two decades of his life to the lepers because he believed that in doing so, he was demonstrating both his love for God and for his neighbor. According to our Lord's words in Matthew's gospel this is the greatest thing we can do with our lives: to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind and soul and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It would be worth noting that Jesus said that we have to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Too many people cannot love others because they do not love themselves. You cannot love another if you do not first love yourself; you will project all your self-hatred and guilt onto the other. Loving another as yourself does not mean merging yourself with that person or eliminating him or her. Loving the other as yourself means allowing the other to experience what we have lived in our foundational relationship with God. Let us relive daily the Lord's rule: "Love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, mind and will and your neighbor as yourself."



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

# Riverside Jr/Sr High continues positive trends

The Oregon Department of Education released school report cards recently, and Riverside Jr/Sr High School continues to receive high marks. This year's report card is much different than in the past, it is showing data regarding the on-time graduation rate and five-year completion rate. In each of the two areas, Riverside was 20 percent higher than the state average.

Over the last five years Riverside has seen an increase each year in students' on-time graduation rate. During that time, the on-time graduation rate has gone up 19 percent. The report card that ODE released for the 2019-2020 school year indicates an on-time graduation rate of over 95 percent for Riverside. The year prior had a 93 percent on-time graduation rate. "Seeing this trend continue to go up is extremely encouraging," Principal David Norton said. "Our goal is to prepare students for life after high school and helping them achieve their



high school diploma is the first step."

Over the last three years Riverside has had 15 students graduate with their AAOT (Associate of Art Oregon Transfer) degrees from Blue Mountain Community College the same year they graduated from high school. Overall the three classes have earned 3,432 college credits.

Riverside's school motto is "Compete For What You Dream For." Norton said students are coming to school every day with a goal in mind and working hard to push themselves to do their best at all times.

It is extremely exciting to see these students achieve the high expectations they have set for themselves in high school and continue that focus after graduation, he continued.

Principal Norton said, "Our staff, families and community work extremely hard to meet the needs of the students, and we are all excited to see the continued growth and success of our school and students. We will continue to work with the students, staff, families and community in Comprehensive Distance Learning to achieve the high expectations we have set."

## ATTENTION HUNTERS!!

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season.



Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos at 188 W Willow in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidservice.net upload them at heppner.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674

DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5PM

# Let's Get Spooky!

Send us photos of your little ghouls and goblins with their jack o'lanterns or other fun Halloween crafts! We want to feature their spooktacular decorations in a special Halloween section of the Heppner Gazette-Times.



Send your photos to editor@rapidservice.net upload at heppner.net or drop off at our office at 188 W Willow St in Heppner.

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