

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

**Protected**

It was recently brought to my attention that there is a certain group of people that are considered "Protected People." Being a rather new term to me, that opened my mind to a flurry of questions. Hmmm.... Exactly what criteria are required to arrive at protected status? What kind of protection? Twenty-four-hour police protection? Security cameras? Bodyguard? German Shepherd? I wanna be protected. Do I get to pick my bodyguard?

But wait.... Aren't we all supposed to be kind of protected? Isn't that what laws are for? And what exactly are these folks protected from? Since our laws, our brains, and a few tactical tools are meant to protect us from physical harm, I'm assuming the type of protection afforded these people must be from something other than a punch in the nose.

Maybe they're talking about something a little more discreet. Maybe emotional distress, aka hurt feelings. If that's the case, we need to remember the old saying about "sticks and stones." People will say mean things sometimes... and sometimes people will actually disagree with what you say or do. Your best protection, in that case, is your feet—as in, walk away. Or use your fingers and scroll on. Might wanna also remember that freedom of speech is a thing. It's also protected by something called the Constitution (Woke folks... seriously, look it up).

I think the danger in setting aside a particular group of able-bodied people as needing more pro-

tection than another group is that Protected People can quickly become Pampered People. Their special status can give them a bit of a "tude" and before you know it, they're stomping their little spoiled feet and demanding special attention. They want their cake and eat it too, so to speak. And if you refuse to decorate their cake, you may find yourself in court, or without a business that you thought was yours. Your right to choose your own customers goes out the window, along with your right to express and act on your religious beliefs.... which is also supposed to be protected. Kinda makes me wonder...who's gonna protect us from the Protected People?

There is a certain group of people that should be protected....but they haven't been. For several years, in fact, it's been open season on them. And the result has caused millions of them to lose their lives. These folks can't stomp their feet and threaten to take you to court, or even speak on their own behalf. They can't even beg for their lives. And that's why they need protection.

We were all there once.... growing, changing, living in our spectacular world. But, except for a few shadowy images, that world is largely hidden from view. How tragic is it that we only see the need to protect those we can see.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Susie Crosby  
Heppner, OR

**County seeks \$1.3 million in Congressional funding for water nitrate solutions**

**By Andrea Di Salvo**  
Water nitrates were back on the agenda at the March 1 meeting of the Morrow County Board of Commissioners. The discussion began when Morrow County Planner Tamra Mabbott asked the board to sign off on a request for more Congressionally Directed Spending.

Following a board discussion on Feb. 22, Mabbott and other county staff worked with Ronan Iglorio of GSI Water Solutions and Nick Ducote of Ducote Consulting to develop a proposal to submit for the 2023 request for the Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS). GSI has contracted with the county as a water consultant, while Ducote Consulting has contracted to help write grants for Morrow County.

The proposed \$1.3 million is the second round of CDS funding the county is seeking. Morrow and Umatilla counties previously secured \$1.7 million in a joint a Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request to help address nitrate contamination of private (domestic) wells in the region last cycle. However, this funding is not anticipated to be available until the third quarter of 2023 through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science and Technology grant program. The county will submit an application to the EPA at that time to release the funds.

Ducote clarified that the county wasn't competing for the grant, per se, but Congress had earmarked the funds for the county with the EPA, and the county still had to follow through with submitting all the paperwork to the EPA and meeting all that agency's requirements.

"It takes the EPA a very long time to develop the guidance for each of these years," Ducote said. "You have to wait for them to go through their process and determine and define all that before you can even engage in that application process to get the money moving."

"And there's really spe-

cific parameters on what that \$1.7 million can be used for," added Mabbott. "It's apart from providing drinking water or emergency services."

The CDS/EPA funding is limited to domestic well areas that can be feasibly served by connecting to existing public/community water systems.

That was the first round of CDS funding. If received, this second round of CDS funding is only for Morrow County and would help further the design and engineering to provide water from a public system for Morrow County domestic well users impacted by elevated nitrate levels in their drinking water.

"Not that we don't appreciate our neighbors," said Mabbott. "It's just that it's time to focus in and look for solutions in Morrow County, which will be unique to Morrow County."

Mabbott told the board of commissioners that a lot of folks, including senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, would like Morrow County to move forward with applying for funds to study and remedy the drinking water problem for rural residents.

"It was difficult to write because we don't know the outcome of the current Congressional direct spending project," said Mabbott.

"I'm really happy to say that we have the City of Irrigon and the City of Boardman's support of all this," added Mabbott, "because this next phase would look at, among other things, an opportunity to extend the city water system."

Mabbott said that isn't an easy issue for the cities. She said Irrigon, for instance, needs more water just to serve its own residents.

"But at least we can study that baseline feasibility of what would it take for a city to extend water outside of their city limits and their Urban Growth Boundary," she said.

"This phase is hopefully to take us from the end of the testing and survey and study phase that's about to start, to some actual solutions," Ducote added. "To even evaluate alternatives, you have to do a little bit

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**Spiritually Speaking**

Father Thankachan Joseph  
St. Patrick Catholic Church Heppner



**Human Sight and Divine Insight**

This fourth Sunday of our Lenten reflections leads us to recognizing Jesus as the Light of the World.

As we continue to read from the Gospel of John (9:1-41), we come across the miraculous healing of the man born blind and the intervention of the Lord in his life. We also see the salvific history gradually unfolding through various readings of those days. On the first Sunday of Lent, we reflected on the sin of the first parents and its consequences. On the second Sunday, we heard the call to Abram from the little town of Ur to move to an unknown land and his trusting in divine providence. In the third week, we saw how the people of Israel failed to recognize the mighty presence of the Lord in the person of Moses. On the fourth Sunday, we come across the anointing of David as the King of Israel by Samuel.

The first reading from the First Book of Samuel (16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a) describes the rejection of Saul as the king of Israel and the anointing of David in his place. God sent Samuel to anoint another king in place of Saul. Samuel went to the house of Jesse as God directed him, but he walked into the household with a "human sight." "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). The consequence of walking by human sight was that Samuel mistook Eliab, the tall and handsome son of Jesse, as the one he sought. Samuel was looking at the physical features, God was looking at the spiritual deposits.

God says to Samuel to choose the littlest one, David, as the king...a clear sign that God doesn't look at the external appearance of anyone. The Lord says to Samuel, "Take no notice of his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him; God does not see as human beings see; they look at appearances, but Yahweh looks at the heart" (v.7).

The rejection of Saul, we need to understand, resulted because he revolted against God. The arrogance of Saul was the main cause of his downfall. In other words, he was impatient, hasty, he did not follow instructions that were given to him. It is good for us to reflect on how we follow certain instructions when we read scriptures or when we attend religious services, that inspirations that run through our mind and heart are the real inspirations of the Lord, that He wants to communicate with us.

We have gone through almost half of our Lenten observances by now. The anointing of David is a clear sign for each one of us to ask ourselves, "Do I need to make any amends in my life? In the same way as king Saul disobeyed God, how did I ignorantly revolt against God?"

The Gospel reading from John this week is an illustration of "I am the light of the world" (8:12). Chapter 9 is an explanation by Jesus very clearly and vividly of that: "I am the light of the world." The whole chapter of 9 is a lengthy conversation that takes place after the healing by Jesus of the man born blind and his being sent by Jesus to the pool of Siloam.

The conversation that takes place between the pharisees and the man born blind is their interrogation of him. A heated argument takes place between the pharisees and the man who was healed by the Lord. The words that inspired me most in these reflections were the words of the man who was healed: "If this man were not from God, he wouldn't have been able to do anything" (v.33).

Actually, this is called the miracle of miracles. The blind man could regain his sight, but the Pharisees could not see the effect of this healing by Jesus and His divinity. The Pharisees with their spiritual sight could not see the work of God. They became spiritual darkness and unbelief. For them, the greatest proof was that Jesus did all this on the Sabbath; they said, "This man cannot be from God. He does not keep the Sabbath" (John 9: 16). The Pharisees are descending into darkness. The blind man, with his physical sight, could see the work of God. He gained physical sight and spiritual enlightenment. He also defended both his healing and the healer.

**Births**

**Bridger Lee Boyer**—Tyler and Lindsey Boyer of Lexington are proud to announce the birth of a son, Bridger Lee Boyer. Bridger was born Feb. 20, 2023, in Pendleton. He weighed 6

pounds, 13 ounces. Grandparents are Jean McKnight and John and Kelly Boyer of Lexington. Great-grandparents Dave and Norma Harrison of Vancouver, WA.

**Heppner, Oregon**  
Mark your calendar for a weekend of traditional St. Patrick's fun!  
**March 17-19, 2023**  
For more information contact the Heppner Chamber of Commerce:  
WWW.HEPPNERCHAMBER.COM HEPPNERCHAMBER@GMAIL.COM 541-676-5536

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**Morrow Co. Ag Technology Field Day**  
May 5<sup>th</sup>, 8 am-5:45 pm  
73117 Strawberry Ln. Lexington, Or  
Hosted by Starvation Farms & PNDSA  
7:30 Coffee and light snacks Noon lunch provided.  
Shop presentations start at 8 AM with field demonstrations at 1 PM Social at the conclusion.  
Companies Presenting  
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