

Hermiston pastor Mark Adams celebrates 30 years at same church

By KATHY ANEY
STAFF WRITER

Pastor Mark Adams' 30 years at Hermiston's Bethlehem Lutheran Church isn't typical.

According to a 2016 poll, the average pastor's tenure at any one church runs about six years, give or take.

Becoming a minister wasn't Adams' original aim. He loved science in high school and elected to major in chemistry at University of California Santa Barbara. It wasn't a good fit, though, and he found himself drawn in another direction the fall of his freshman year.

"In my dorm, we had all these conversations about religion and spiritual things," Adams said. "People were coming to me for advice."

Theological questions absorbed the young man. At Christmas, he enrolled in Christ College (now Concordia University Irvine) for pre-seminary classes. After earning a bachelor's degree there, he started at the Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and spent four years soaking in Hebrew, Greek, church history and reforms, counseling methods, worship and scripture. He interned at a church in California in his third year.

Adams arrived at the Hermiston church in 1989 with his wife, Tess, and children, ready to shepherd his first congregation. Five minutes with him reveals why his flock of 127 adores their pastor so much. He is a big, bearded bear of a man, easy-going and genuine. He reg-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Pastor Mark Adams talks to his congregation during a recent worship service at Hermiston's Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Adams started as pastor 30 years ago when he was fresh out of seminary.

ularly inserts humor into his Sunday messages. His wife, Tess, who has known Adams since eighth grade, sums up his personality this way:

"He's the same person in the pulpit as he is at home," Tess said. "Our dinner conversation with four children was pretty similar to what he says on Sunday."

Those four children are now grown. Son Caleb is a minister. Twins Sarah and Rebekah teach school. Youngest daughter Mary is program director for Domestic Violence Services in Pendleton.

Tom Nichols, church board president and friend of Adams, described Adams as the perfect pastor.

"He has common sense.

He has empathy. He's so grounded with scripture," Nichols said. "Seventy percent of what he does is behind the scenes."

Adams doesn't shy away from theological conundrums such as biblical paradoxes or whether it's normal to experience doubt. He explores such queries with all comers, whether in his office or while fishing with one of his daughters at Hat Rock.

On a recent Sunday, about 40 parishioners sat in the pews waiting for service to begin. Messages scrolled on a flat-screen monitor near the ceiling. One said,

"In case Pastor's preaching is too red hot, there is a fire extinguisher in the front by

the pulpit."

Many of the congregation's children sat up front. Their occasional noises didn't faze Adams.

"If a toddler is screaming, he doesn't care," said congregation member Andrea Rivera. "He just keeps preaching."

Adams said the congregation is like a large extended family. The children learn how to worship by watching and interacting with adults.

"They don't look like they're listening, but they are," Adams said.

The pastor connects with children easily, say those who know him — helpful since the church runs a preschool in the same building.

The program recently celebrated its 40th year in operation, which tops Adams' own anniversary by a decade. All four of his children attended the school. Tess Adams started as an assistant there 26 years ago. After obtaining her early childhood degree, she became a teacher and now directs the school. The number of students has grown to 102. The people who started the preschool — Jan Schultz and Warren and Judy Hall — are still members of the congregation.

If Adams feels stressed or bored, he wanders into the preschool and makes Play-Doh creations with the 3- to 5-year-olds there. He also conducts chapel sessions for the kids.

On a recent afternoon, teacher Amy Gillson led a group of 4-year-olds who sat in a circle around her. They practiced saying hello in various languages, listened to a book, practiced writing the letter "T," listened to a Bible verse and took turns placing blocks one on top of the other to make a tower. They laughed uproariously when it fell. During a snack break of graham crackers and peanut butter, they sang a blessing, chatted about the upcoming "Frozen 2" movie and discussed the rectangular shape of the cookies they nibbled.

Tess Adams called the preschool the church's mission field. The children, she said, explore the social, spiritual and academic parts of themselves. The students meet for two hours, 15 minutes in either the morning or afternoon for three days

a week.

Mark Adams, who is 57, said he occasionally has felt stale during his long tenure. When that happens, he said, he dives back into scripture.

"If we really believe God's word is a living word, we will find something new and exciting in it every time we look," he said. "The congregation has allowed me to be creative and that keeps the brain engaged."

Adams knows that church membership is down sharply around the nation. A Gallup poll found that membership averages about half of us, down from at least 70% between 1937 and 1976 and 68% through the 1990s.

Adams said the decline has forced the Church as a whole to look in the mirror.

"The millennial generation — they want authenticity and transparency," he said.

The pastor senses the Church turning a corner.

"I think the Church is rallying and maybe we've reached a leveling off," Adams said. "Some of the dross has been burned off a bit."

As for Adams, he plans to continue leading his flock as best he can as a man who acknowledges his imperfections.

"I don't have any thoughts that I'm anywhere close to perfect, but I know I'm deeply loved and forgiven," he said. "We have to be gracious and merciful with each other."

Nichols said Adams leads the way.

"He's dedicated to his calling," Nichols said. "That's how he rolls."

EASTERN OREGON

marketplace

Place classified ads online at www.eastoregonian.com or call 1-800-962-2819 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours, leave a voicemail and we'll confirm your ad the next business day. Email us at classifieds@eastoregonian.com or fax: 541-278-2680

Deadline is 3 p.m. the day before publication

We accept:  

211 S.E. Byers Ave. 333 E. Main St.
Pendleton, OR 97801 Hermiston, OR 97838

See www.eastoregonian.com for classified ads from all over Eastern Oregon

EAST OREGONIAN • HERMISTON HERALD • BLUE MOUNTAIN EAGLE • WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

104 Special Notices

IMPORTANT NOTICE

PLEASE CHECK YOUR AD ON THE FIRST DAY OF PUBLICATION.

While we are happy to make any necessary corrections, we can not be responsible for errors appearing for multiple days. Thank you!



You can find your dream home

Check out our Real Estate Listings in the Classifieds

EAST OREGONIAN

CLASSIFIED LINE AD DEADLINES

East Oregonian
2:30PM the day prior to publication

Hermiston Herald
10am Tuesday
1-800-962-2819

184 Personals

WOW!

Use an attention getter, color, or border to make your ad stand out!

Contact Rowan or Chloe at classifieds@eastoregonian.com
1-800-962-2819
to place your classified ad!

360 Garage Sales

Parking Lot Sale
Saturday October 19th
Sale will be at the 305 SE 4th Street, begins at 9:00am. Clothing, household items and furniture.

Parking lot sale
Saturday October 19th.
Sale will be at the Agape House at 500 Harper Road and begins at 8:30 a.m.
Sale ends at 11:30.
Clothing, furniture, and bins of knick-knacks. Clothing will be 5 items for \$1.00.
Furniture priced as marked and bins of knick-knacks will be you name the price.

Huge Moving-Estate Sale
1st of 2 sales
714 NE 2nd Street in Pendleton OR.

Oct 18th, 19th, and 20th, 9 AM to 2 PM
Sunday half price on most items
Bid Box Friday and Saturday
Visa and Mastercard accepted

Take North Main St. To Furnish, Turn Right onto NE Furnish to 2nd St. then take left. Follow signs, lots of parking!

Church pew, shell back chairs, antique desk, chair w ottoman, drawer cabinet, file cabinets. Sterling + silverplate, houseware, Lovita Elk, Bauer + many other pottery pieces, retro dishes, Pendleton Blankets. Men + women's; jeans, winter wear, boots, purses, scarves + misc. Sled, lots of Xmas, great baskets, WW2 items, grenade boxes, train pieces, knives, ladders, hand + power tools, yard tools + decor, potting bench, primitives, pressure washers, chain saw, compressor, weed eaters, hardware, rugs, fishing, workmate, records + CDs, skis + clothing and much more!

See Pictures online @
Vintage Court Antiques
Estate Sales
541-377-0510

YOUR DREAM HOME is right here in the Classifieds! Check our real estate listings.

360 Garage Sales

Huge Moving Estate Sale
October 18th, 19th and 20th
1st of 2 sales

See details, pictures + descriptions next week in the EO, The Nickle, Flyers, and at the Vintage Court Antiques Estate Sales online.

See you next week!

502 Real Estate

Fall is here! It is a great time to find that perfect home for the holidays. Call me today so we can get started.

Carolyn at Ranch-N-Home Realty. 541-786-0822

TURN HERE REALTY-- One Realtor accessing all properties--Prompt, Courteous, Reliable service to find your New Home

Call Kerry 541 377 6855 or drop by the Office at 305 SW Court Ave Pendleton

How Much is your Home Worth? Call Matt Vogler, The Weekend and After Hours Realtor, for a free Market Analysis. 541.377.9470. More Listings needed to meet current buyer demand!

John J. Howard & Assoc. (541) 377-9470

504 Homes for Sale

Prices are up! Now may be the time to gain some equity and move up to a larger home. Call Matt Vogler for a free Market Analysis.

John J. Howard & Assoc. (541) 377-9470

Current MLS listings include several 3 and 4 bedroom, 2 bath homes for sale in popular locations. Call Matt Vogler, "The Weekend and After Hours Realtor" for addresses and pricing.

John J. Howard & Assoc. 541.377.9470

LOOKING for a second car? The classified section is a complete car-buyer's guide.

New Listing 712 SE Court . Car wash or Espresso shop on a very high traffic intersection. \$ 94950 Priced to Sell RMLS#19111739 Call Kal for more info (541) 969-7358

Garton & Associates 541-276-0931

504 Homes for Sale

1st time home buyers and don't know where to begin? I can help you every step of the way to owning your own doorstep.

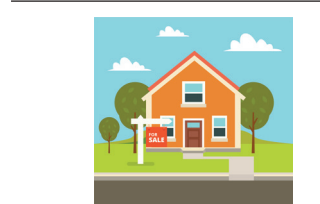
Call Carolyn Ravier so we can get started! Ranch-N-Home Realty 541-786-0822

How Much is your Home Worth? Call Matt Vogler, The Weekend and After Hours Realtor, for a free Market Analysis. 541.377.9470. More Listings needed to meet current buyer demand!

John J. Howard & Assoc. (541) 377-9470

\$239,999- RMLS #18081947 New Listing 4 b/r 1 3/4 bath North Hill. Freshly painted, beautiful hardwood floors just refinished. Great family home. Call Shane for more info (541) 379-7802.

Garton & Associates 541-276-0931



REDUCED to \$175 000 Storage Galore! Move in Ready with fresh beginnings-1780 Sq ft 2 level home- 3 bed 2 bath, detached garage & sheds #19641273

Call your Realtor to tour TURN HERE REALTY & TRAVEL 305 SW Court Ave Pendleton

\$295,000 - 4 Bedroom 3 Bath Tri Level. Very nice throughout. Large fenced yard. Updated kitchen. Large deck and nice city view. Close to shopping. MLS# 19655891

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" (541)-379-8690

\$387,500 - 4 Bedroom 3 Bath 3754 sq. ft. Mid-Century Modern, Panoramic View. Private setting. Wonderful home for privacy or entertaining. MLS# 19205109

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

504 Homes for Sale

\$119,000 - 2 Bedroom 1 Bath Log Cabin near tollgate. Approximately 2 acres. 100 yards from Snowmobile trail entrance. Cash only, will not finance. MLS# 19024843

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

\$275,000 - 2018 Fleetwood MFG Home on 2.51 Acres. 4 Bed 2 Bath. Open floor plan. Beautiful Kitchen. Lots of room for the family, Pets, and Livestock. MLS# 19510220

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

\$199,900 Full of Amenities. Updated home w/large family room and great flow to private backyard, great for entertaining. detached garage with heated shop. Jef 541-969-9539 cell. #19032421

Coldwell Banker Whitney & Associates 541-276-0021

\$45,000 GREAT VIEWS/1.49 ACRES ON 2 CITY TAX LOTS. Zoned for stick built or manufactured home. City sewer/water to property. Call Cari 541-377-5058cell #13575330

Coldwell Banker Whitney & Associates 541-276-0021

TRIPLEX-REDUCED-Invest or Live on main level and rent to finance! Owner will carry finance with acceptable terms. 5 bedroom 3 Bath with bonus rooms and Laundry in each unit.#19408035 Call your Realtor for your Opportunity \$259 000

TURN HERE REALTY & TRAVEL 305 SW Court Ave Pendleton

Sold... \$135000 - 3 Bedroom 1 Bath Ranch Style in Pilot Rock. Hardwood Floors. Vinyl Siding. Large Fenced Back Yard. Central Air Conditioning. Very nice home. MLS# 19534828

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

504 Homes for Sale

RMLS#18381851 Pendleton Property 3 br 2 bath manufactured home on a big lot with small 2 b/r 1bath rental house on same lot. Priced to sell at \$145,000. Call Cathy for more info. (541) 215-0103.

Garton & Associates 541-276-0931

\$475,000 - Beautiful 4 Bed 3 Bath Custom View Home. Exceptional throughout. Updated Kitchen. Hardwood Floors. 2 Family Rooms. Large Bedrooms. 40x54 Shop. MLS# 19582968

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

Sold... \$184,500 - 6 Bed 2.5 Bath on North Hill. 3000+ sq. ft. Hardwood floors upstairs. 2 car garage. Quiet neighborhood. Needs cosmetics. Priced to sell. MLS# 19351147

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

\$265,000 - 3 Bedroom 2 1/2 Bath View Home. Large lot. Open floor plan. Loft office. Large Deck overlooks a beautiful Southwest View. 2 car Garage. RV parking. MLS# 19351147

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

Pending Sale... \$109,500 - Pilot Rock 3 Bedroom 1 Bath MFG Home. Very nice condition inside and outside. Carport. Fenced yard. Large Shed. Gas Fireplace. Newer flooring. MLS# 19609256

Rocky Mikesell Blue Jeans Realty "Our office is wherever you are" 541-379-8690

\$299,900 View! 4bed, 2.5bath, w/office and family room. Recent upgrades: kitchen, carpet, paint, trim and most new windows. Near park, medical facilities, RAC. Vicki 541-969-9441 cell. #19082889

Coldwell Banker Whitney & Associates 541-276-0021