

# Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church church plans grand opening

Public invited to service Oct. 16, open house Oct. 17

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

The Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church is back.

Having completed construction on a new church building at 855 W. Highland Ave. following an electrical fire that destroyed the old building three years ago, church leaders are welcoming people to a grand opening and dedication. The celebration is Friday and Saturday, Oct. 16 and 17.

Sid Rittenbach, chair of the building committee and a church member, recently recounted his feelings about the fire.

"It was a discouraging time," he said.

The old building was "gutted," blackened and destroyed. Much of the building was reduced to rubble, he said.

Other people felt the same way, Rittenbach said. The fire, though, was not enough to break their spirit. They kept meeting for services, moving their usual around 100-person services to the gymnasium of their school.

The congregation formed a committee in response to their building's destruction. They discussed, and they started plans for a new building. The new building, which would end up costing around \$5 million, according to Rittenbach, would be larger and would include addition features.

The new building, just

## HERMISTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH GRAND OPENING

Saturday, Oct. 16, 9:30-10:30 a.m., is Sabbath School. Worship service is 10:40 a.m. to 12 p.m. The guest speaker is the president of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Fellowship luncheon is 1 p.m., and a concert and dedication is 3-4 p.m. p.m. On Sunday, Oct. 17, there is an open house and tours, 1-4 p.m.

less than 24,000 square feet, is an upgrade from the old building's 14,000 square feet. It also has LED lighting that is programmable, as are the heating and security cameras.

"I'm sure that those who built the old building do miss it, but we are blessed to have this one," he said.

Dean and Karen Lifshay have been with the church more than five years, Dean as the pastor and Karen as the communications secretary.

Karen said the old building was nice and in the style of other Seventh-day Adventist churches. This gave it a "familiar" feel, she said, but there were drawbacks, too. It did not have a fellowship hall, and it gave little space to the Spanish-speaking congregation, which meets separately



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald  
Karen and Dean Lifshay pose Friday, Oct. 8, 2021, in front of the Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church building was rebuilt and is having a grand opening with events Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 16 and 17.

from the English-language services. There is a chapel inside the new building, whereas a classroom held Spanish-language services previously.

"We planned for growth," Karen said.

The chapel can accommodate 120 worshipers, though there are only 40 Spanish-speakers in the chapel group presently. The main room of the old church had capacity for 400, though this number is misleading, she said. If there were 400 people in

the service hall, they would have been tightly packed together. The new sanctuary has space for 350 people in much more comfortable seating, she said. There also are rooms, where people can also watch the service.

"In theory, it's around 1,000 people," Karen said of the potential total occupancy of the church for a worship service.

Karen said she likes this "wider format" and improved technology. The new building is missing

an organ, which was present in the old building, but the other upgrades are more than worth that loss, she said. Besides, the organ was not often used.

This church building is modern, light and airy, standing in contrast to the traditional and somewhat dark old building, Karen said. In her years as a Seventh-day Adventist member, she has seen more than 50 churches. She and her husband were stationed at some of these churches. And while she said this building may be nice even in comparison to them, a good church is not about

the building. It is about the people.

Fortunately, this church is made of good people, she said.

The church, according to the pastor, is trying to encourage people to return. The pandemic, Dean said, has been tough. Many people are choosing to stay home, either because they are worried about COVID-19 or because they are turned off by the people who wear masks.

Dean said he hopes he can reach people and bring them back to the church. Maybe he can even attract new people to the church.



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Karen and Dean Lifshay on Friday, Oct. 8, 2021, discuss the newly built Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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