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Christmas On The Missouri: Creating A Community Tradition

By Sarah Wetzel
 For the Plain Talk

The religious community in Vermillion now has another thing to look forward to during the holiday season with the second annual 'Christmas on the Missouri'

concert this Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on 20 S. Mickelson Ave.

The concert is free and open to the public. Matthew Fairholm is currently the leader of the Vermillion LDS congregation.

"We were hoping to create a community tradition that helps celebrate Christmas with a Christ-centered focus," he said. "That was our vision. We started last year with just inviting as many people as we could and then we decided to see if we could involve other people. People who showed up to hear the concert wanted to participate so we took advantage of that and it kind of grew and grew."

The event has grown from a single-congregation Christmas concert to a city-wide religious event.

"As of right now we have the choir from the LDS church, the choir from the United Church of Christ, the choir from Trinity Lutheran, a choir from United Methodist and a group from St. Agnes that are all coming and performing," said Mandi Steele, the event's organizer. "It will be a mix of choir pieces and either small ensemble or solo pieces. We have a piano soloist, we have a vocal soloist, an oboe soloist as well as combined men's piece with all the choirs. We're finishing with a combined choir and audience participation Alleluia chorus. That will be awesome. It's going to end up being quite the conglomerate of music. We were very specific that we wanted them all to be sacred in nature, focusing on the birth of Christ. Everyone has chosen some really great songs. I'm really excited about this."

It seems as if the excitement is widespread.

"It actually has been coming together quite well and everyone seems to be extremely excited about this," Steele said. "I have friends at school who are planning on coming who don't even go to any of the churches. They just want to come for a Christ-centered Christmas concert. It's actually been very enlightening to me to see how we can all come together under this common belief in the birth of Jesus Christ and want to celebrate that aspect and really give it the focus that it should be given right now. I think everyone in this community at least recognizes that it's becoming less of a focus. It's nice to see everyone agree that focusing on that is a good idea."

The event comes from cooperation between multiple faiths according to Steele.

"Ultimately thanks to Gretchen Burbach with the United Church of Christ the word got out to other churches mostly because I don't know many other people on that scene and she does," she said. "She was a great help in inviting and seeing who else might be interested. Once she mentioned this person and that person it wasn't that hard. It's a lot of little moving parts that you have to keep track of but it's actually been working really well."

The ultimate goal, according to Fairholm and Steele, is to have a huge annual community event, though the current size is challenging enough.

"It's getting full," Steele said. "We're already having to limit the number of musical pieces from each congregation which is great because there's so many people that want to do that and I want to showcase everyone's talent."

After the musical portion of the evening, guests will enjoy refreshments and nativity displays.

"I have to admit the whole thing was tremendous, beyond my expectations last year," Fairholm said. "I also enjoyed the nativity scenes that were in the cultural hall afterward so it had some art and craft as well as music and it focused on the real spirit of Christmas."

Fairholm hopes that people leave uplifted.

"I hope they have a meaningful experience that's focused on the true meaning of Christmas," he said. "Few things do that better than music and song."

Another hope, according to Fairholm, is that this spirit will remain throughout the year.

"People are in need every day of the year and people are in need of helping those in need every day of the year," he said. "Christmas is great because it reminds us of that. The hope is that we can keep it in our hearts every day. I'm grateful that Christmas comes around once a year because it allows us to remember if we have forgotten."

bp Broadcaster Press
 Fill the puzzle so that every row, every column, and every section contain the numbers 1-9 without repeating a number.

5		4			2	9		
2							5	4
					1			
				3			2	8
		8				6		
7	4			5				
			2					
9	8							5
		7	8			1		6

INTERMEDIATE INT BOOK 60 #5

Last Tuesday's Solution

8	6	4	7	5	3	1	2	8
5	7	2	8	1	8	9	3	4
1	8	3	9	4	2	7	5	6
3	1	6	8	2	7	5	4	9
4	9	5	1	3	6	8	7	2
7	2	8	5	9	4	6	1	3
6	3	1	2	8	5	4	9	7
2	5	7	4	6	9	3	8	1
8	4	9	3	7	1	2	6	5

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 Check next Tuesday's paper for the solution to today's puzzle.
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USD Releases Names of Graduate Candidates for 40th Winter Commencement

VERMILLION - The University of South Dakota will grant degrees to about 560 graduates for the Fall 2015 term, most of whom will participate in the 40th annual Winter Commencement at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, in the DakotaDome.

Jeffrey Holcomb, president and CEO of Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls and a 1982 USD graduate, will give the keynote address. He grew up in Long Valley, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and received a bachelor's degree in German and political science and a master's in public administration from USD.

Commencement details are available online and USD Athletics/goyotes.com will stream the ceremony live.

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