New Elma Stake Presidency For Elma Church of Latter Day Saints

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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ELMA, Wash. - Nearly 900 people gathered on Sunday, November 7, 2010 in the Elma Washington Stake Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a new Stake Presidency was installed. The new president of the religious organization is Montesano resident, Russell M. Larsen, a dentist and co-owner of Broadway Dental Center. Chosen as his counselors were Shelton resident Dan Cochran and Anthony F. Salas, Jr. of Aberdeen. Dr. Larsen and his wife Kay Lynn are the parents of four children, Kristy, Lindsey, Jared and Jacob. Jacob Larsen is a senior at Montesano High School; his older brother Jared is in Nicaragua serving as a missionary for the Church. The Larsen’s daughters are married and live out of state; there are four grandchildren in the extended family. “Being a husband and grandfather is my greatest joy and first priority in my life,“ states Larsen, who also enjoys waterskiing, hiking and running.

About his assignment to serve as the ecclesiastical leader of nearly 4,000 people in the geographical area of the Elma Stake, Larsen said,” I am honored to be called by the Lord to serve the people in this great area and I will serve to the best of my ability. I look forward to helping our members and friends find peace in their souls and hope in these troubled times through the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.” Dan Cochran is known to many in the Shelton area as a former church Bishop and also as a Scoutmaster. He works for the Department of Corrections as a Community Corrections Officer in Yelm. He and his wife Karma have five children and three grandchildren. Four of their children have filled two-year missions for the Church and son Wendell recently graduated from Air force training. When asked how he feels about this new leadership position, Cochran said that he was “very humbled to have this call when there are so many good men that could fill the position.” Anthony F. Salas, Jr. and his family recently moved to Aberdeen from California. He is employed as Chief Technology Officer at Anchor Bank in Aberdeen. He and his wife Phyllis have been married 31 years and have six children and seven grandchildren. Salas says that he was raised in San Diego, CA and he married his “high school sweetheart”. The previous Elma Stake President was Arlin Burbidge of Elma who served in that capacity for the past nine years. His counselors were Russell Larsen and Stephen Beck. The local congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are called wards (or branches for smaller congregations). They are organized geographically and members attend a ward or branch near their home. A group of wards forms a stake, and the leader of a stake is a stake president. “Stake” is a term taken from the Old Testament tent imagery in which the “tent,” or church, is held up by supporting stakes (see Isaiah 54:2). Congregations within the Elma Stake are found in Shelton, Elma, Aberdeen, Westport, Raymond and Ocean Shores. Leaders of the Church are not paid for their service, it is a lay ministry. According to a representative, members believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The calling and appointment of church leaders is made through “divine guidance”. Two General Authorities from the Church’s headquarters were sent to Elma to facilitate the installation of the new presidency in the Elma Stake. Richard G. Hinckley, Of the Seventy—a quorum of priesthood leadership, came from Salt Lake City for the meeting, and Brad K. Risenmay, Area Seventy, traveled from Othello, WA. Elder

Hinckley said, “We didn’t travel here to pick the new presidency, we came here to identify who the Lord had already chosen for the positions.” He stressed the importance of divine revelation in the selection process, indicating that prior to the meeting he and Elder Risenmay were only acquainted with a handful of people in the area.