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The Portland Daily Sun

Portland, Maine. Yes. News is good here!

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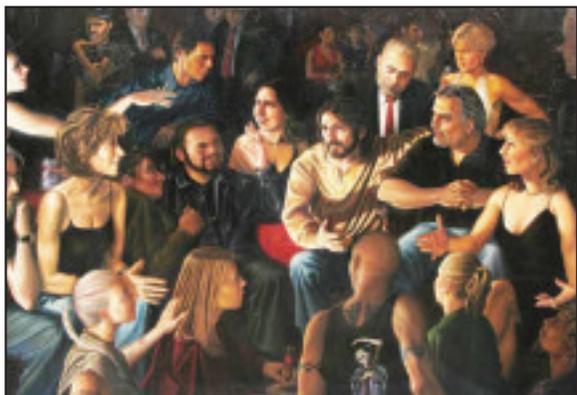
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RIGHT: This image, from the Cross Church website, seeks to illustrate the inclusiveness of a new Maine place of Christian worship, Cross Church. Image by Frank Murphy, Baptist Collegiate Minister for Berry College in Rome, Georgia (used with permission). (COURTESY IMAGE)



New Cross Church casts wide net for followers; goal is to share positive message — See story, page 8

Pot legalization fails to spur arrests

Four citations issued by police since marijuana legalization ordinance was enacted — Page 3



Recreational legal use of marijuana has joined medical applications in Portland. David Boyer, of the Marijuana Policy Project, said advocates plan to keep an eye on citations handed out by the Portland Police Department, noting advocates of the city's recently enacted marijuana legalization ordinance will continue to keep an eye on any citations issued to adults found in possession that conflict with the ordinance. (DAVID CARKHUFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION)

New Cross Church casts wide net for followers

By **TIMOTHY GILLIS**
SPECIAL TO THE PORTLAND DAILY SUN

A local lobsterman plans to start fishing with another kind of net. Dr. Aaron Werner, who grew up in Scarborough where he was an accomplished decathlete, will give his first sermon at the Abromson Community Center on Sunday at 10 a.m. Founder of the Cross Church, Werner plans to augment his weekly sermons with work as a lobsterman. It's a combined vocation that has been years in the making.

Werner was a senior at Scarborough High School in 1989. He would have won the state championships in the 300-meter hurdles and the pole vault had he not been edged out by his younger brother, Ryan, a sophomore. Werner says their early days spent fishing helped build the strength and stamina that would serve them so well in athletics.

"That's why he was able to beat me," Werner said. "I always made him row."

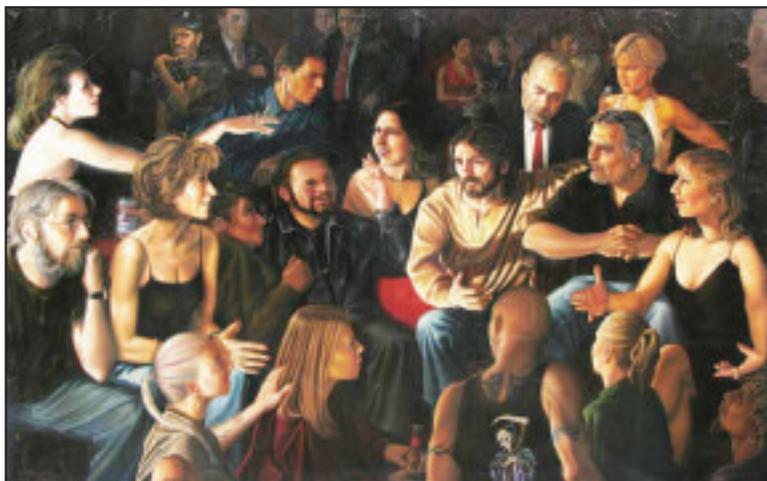
The Werners started lobstering out of Kettle Cove in 1981. After high school, Werner went to the University of Maine at Orono for two years. While there, something stirred within him that suggested he might one day be a fisher of men.

"While at Orono, I was an agnostic and a skeptic," Werner said. "I was a biology major, but started to realize that intelligent design doesn't necessarily mean optimum design."

Through a ministry called "Campus Crusade for Christ" during sophomore year, Werner went to a conference and met Josh McDowell, who writes books on apologetics including "Evidence that Demands a Verdict."

Before the philosophical changes were complete, Werner was in for a geographical one.

He transferred to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. "It was a decathlon mecca. The coach saw me in one of my brother's videos," Werner said, and they were reunited



TOP: This image, from the Cross Church website, seeks to illustrate the inclusiveness of Cross Church. Image by Frank Murphy, Baptist Collegiate Minister for Berry College in Rome, Georgia (used with permission).

LEFT: Daughters Kayla, Hope, Hannah and Kristen with Kathy and Aaron Werner. The Werners moved to Maine in June, from Rome, Ga. (COURTESY IMAGES)

at Liberty.

Werner then got into free diving when he was in West Palm Beach, diving to 100 feet to spear grouper and snapper. He was a schoolteacher there, where he taught science and math at a private high school, and made more money spearing fish than teaching.

He came upon the notion to combine the two callings, at least metaphorically, and he began preaching as a way to fish for followers.

The Werners moved to Maine in June, from Rome, Ga. He and his wife, Kathy, have four daughters, and are renting on the Flaherty Farm in Scarborough.

He bought a 40-foot Young Brothers boat from Corea, Maine — a boat like his dad's — and he plans on working the traps, lobstering two days a week. His half-brother, Thom, a Portland lobsterman, helped out by selling him some used traps. He plans to keep his boat off the Eastern Prom. His dad, Skip, from whom he and his brother learned the trade, still keeps his boat on Union Wharf.

Werner knows he will need to emulate the apostle Paul, working a day job and preaching nights. He has worked for mega churches before, but this is the first church he has started.

"The trend had been to 'plant churches,'" Werner said. "The new

trend is 'bi-vocational' church planting. I'd like to start more than a church; I'd like to start a movement." He hopes to launch other new "campuses" as well, in York, for example.

"We hopes it spreads more like fire than linear growth," he said.

"Cross Church is an autonomous, non-denominational, non-judgmental gathering of people who are interested in following Jesus, but have reservations regarding organized religion. We are a God-centered, gospel-driven congregation committed to reaching Greater Portland with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ through culturally relevant music, engaging messages, authentic fellowship, and passionate community outreach," according to their website.

The sermons will be delivered on the USM campus, but Werner's dream location is off of Marginal Way, at the Portland Yoga studio.

"They wanted \$1.2 million, but it would only hold 300 people," he said. "That's not quite enough for what we envision."

Werner has received support from across the country, especially the First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga., and the pastor Mel Blackaby, of the Canadian Baptist Church.

"It's primarily financial support, but also professional advice," Werner said. "I went there in November and preached a couple times."

The Cross Church aims to be defined for what it's for, not what it's against, and hopes to avoid getting mired in religious hot topics like sexuality, for example. Werner wants his church to be "somewhere between those that say there's nothing wrong with homosexuality, and those that say it's an unpardonable sin," he said, citing the opinion of C.S. Lewis who claimed it a minor concern.

Werner considers pride to be the deadliest sin, and knows that hauling lobster traps on the unforgiving Atlantic can be a quick way to remind one of his place in the universe.

Press Hotel work scheduled to begin this month at old newspaper office

By **DAVID CARKHUFF**
THE PORTLAND DAILY SUN

The Press Hotel, a boutique hotel planned in the old offices of the Portland Press Herald at 390 Congress St., will move into a construction phase this month, the developer reported.

"We have engaged Wright Ryan Construction ... they have been engaged as the construction manager on the project and are set to begin this month," working both inside and outside, said Jim Brady, who represents 119 Development LLC in developing the 110-room boutique hotel, which aims to include a full-service restaurant and bar.

Today at 5 p.m., the Portland Historic Preservation Board will meet in Council Chambers of City Hall to review an application for certificate of appropriateness for the hotel's comprehensive exterior lighting program. Brady said this review is a minor step — "really a small, cursory review" to approve lighting designs for the development.

At an undisclosed price, the developer plans to renovate the former Portland Press Herald building complex, which consists of a seven-story main block built in 1923 at the southern end of the block and a five-story addition built in 1948 which faces Congress Street.

In spring 2010, the Portland Press Herald/Maine



Old offices of the Portland Press Herald. (FILE PHOTO)

Sunday Telegram moved out of its longtime office to new headquarters at One City Center.

The comprehensive exterior lighting program was deemed a footnote to the project; Kugler Ning Lighting Design of New York is the lighting consultant.

In February 2013, the historic preservation board approved plans for exterior and site alterations associated with this project, according to a memo by Deborah Andrews, historic preservation program manager. "At the time of the public hearing, the applicant indicated that their plans for exterior lighting and signage were still in the preliminary design phase and that they would be presented to the board for review

and approval once finalized," Andrews wrote.

Now, Brady said he has planning board and historic preservation board approvals, as well as the go-ahead from the state's historic preservation and National Park Service.

"It's gone through all of its approvals," he said.

"The project is moving ahead on schedule, we plan to open in the spring of 2015," Brady said Tuesday.

Brady said he has been working with state historic office staff and the local historic preservation staff on the lighting.

"We are providing for the addition of some exterior sconces on the columns around the dates of the building to help provide some lighting at the street level and the sidewalk level, as well as help tie together the two buildings," he said.

"The lighting is not very significant, it's quite subtle, and a fixture was selected to blend in with the architecture," Brady said.

Brady described a "base building" condition inside, after extensive demolition was completed inside the building. The exterior of the building has "very tight regulations about what can be done, so very minimal changes will be made to the outside of the building," he said. The entire sidewalk around the building will be removed and replaced as part of the project, Brady said.