

STERLING FINANCIAL CORP /WA/

Form 8-K

October 15, 2009

UNITED STATES

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

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FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT

PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Date of Report (Date of earliest event reported): October 12, 2009

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**STERLING FINANCIAL CORPORATION**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

**Washington**

**0-20800**

**91-1572822**

(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization) (Commission File Number) (I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

**111 North Wall Street, Spokane, Washington 99201**

(Address of principal executive offices) (Zip Code)

**(509) 458-3711**

(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

**Not Applicable**

(Former Name or Former Address, if Changed Since Last Report)

Check the appropriate box below if the Form 8-K filing is intended to simultaneously satisfy the filing obligation of the registrant under any of the following provisions:

Written communications pursuant to Rule 425 under the Securities Act (17 CFR 230.425)

Soliciting material pursuant to Rule 14a-12 under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14a-12)

Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 14d-2(b) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14d-2(b))

Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 13e-4(c) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.13e-4(c))

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**INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE REPORT**

**Item 5.02. Departure of Directors or Principal Officers; Election of Directors; Appointment of Principal Officers.**

(b) On October 14, 2009, Sterling Financial Corporation ("Sterling") issued a press release announcing the departure of Harold B. Gilkey, from his positions as Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Sterling. Sterling also announced the departure of Heidi B. Stanley from her positions as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Sterling Savings Bank and as a Director of Sterling Savings Bank, effective immediately. The text of the press release is included as Exhibit 99.1 to this report.

(c) Sterling today also announced that it has appointed J. Gregory "Greg" Seibly, President of Sterling Savings Bank, to serve as acting President and Chief Executive Officer of Sterling and acting Chief Executive Officer of Sterling Savings Bank. In addition, Ezra Eckhardt, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Sterling Savings Bank, has been appointed acting Chief Operating Officer of Sterling and acting President of Sterling Savings Bank. Mr. Seibly's and Mr. Eckhardt's appointments are subject to final review and approval by Sterling's regulators, who have been informed of the changes. Mr. Eckhardt will also continue to serve as Chief Operating Officer of the bank.

Mr. Seibly, 46, was appointed President of Sterling Savings Bank in January 2009. He joined Sterling in 2007 as Executive Vice President and Chief Production Officer with more than 20 years of experience in the financial industry. Before joining Sterling, Mr. Seibly was the President of U.S. Bank – California. He has also held executive-level positions in commercial banking at Wells Fargo Bank and in healthcare finance at Bank of America. Mr. Seibly currently serves on the executive board of the Boy Scouts of America – Inland Northwest Council and the board of the United Way of Greater Spokane. He received his bachelor's degree in business administration and finance from Indiana University.

Mr. Eckhardt, 39, was appointed Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Sterling Savings Bank in January 2009 and served as Chief Administrative Officer. He joined Sterling in August 2004. His prior experience includes general management, operations, leadership and continuous improvement work at Microsoft, Honeywell and the U.S. Army. Mr. Eckhardt is an adjunct professor at the Gonzaga University Graduate School of Business, a member of the Greater Spokane Incorporated Higher Education Leadership Group and a member of the board of directors for the Spokane affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. He is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Eckhardt also has earned an MBA from Gonzaga University and has advanced training in applied statistics from the Rochester Institute of Technology.

**Item 9.01. Financial Statements and Exhibits.**

(d) The following exhibit is being filed herewith:

Exhibit No.   Exhibit Description

99.1            Press release text of Sterling Financial Corporation dated October 14, 2009.

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**SIGNATURE**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned thereunto duly authorized.

**STERLING FINANCIAL CORPORATION**

(Registrant)

October 14, 2009      By: /s/ Daniel G. Byrne

Date

**Daniel G. Byrne**

Executive Vice President, Assistant Secretary and  
Principal Financial Officer

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**EXHIBIT INDEX**

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