

**Olympia
First
Baptist
Church**

Inside this issue:

**Front Page:
THE THIN PLACE**

**THE THIN PLACE
CONTINUED** 2

**STEWARDSHIP -
STEPPING INTO GOD'S
GENEROSITY** 3

SAVE THE DATES 4

**Insert: JANUARY
BIRTHDAYS,
LADIES LUNCHEON,
& THANK YOU TO ALL
THE CAROLERS**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING
JR. DAY CELEBRATION
SERVICE at NBFC
WORSHIP AND FAMILY
LIFE CENTER, Renton** 5

**2026 ANNUAL LEADER-
SHIP RETREAT, FEB 5-7
CAMP BURTON** 6

**WOMEN'S MINISTRIES,
Jean Heidal &
DEACON'S CORNER
Pat Luhr** 7

The Thin Place:

Where the Sacred and the Ordinary Collide

It was suggested to me from members of our Executive Leadership Team that I might consider reposting my Annual Report article for 2025, for this first newsletter of January, 2026. It was good suggestion. After all, I would imagine that not everyone was able to pick up a copy of the Annual Report, plus our newsletter, The Windows, has a pretty extensive mailing list. What you will read below, is my attempt at giving you a “state of Oly First” overview of where we have been, where we are currently, and what might be in our future.

Annual Report '25 – Senior Pastor – Rev. Mark Rambo

Made in God's Image

Enough in God's eyes

Deeply, Deeply, Loved!

Each and every day, I try to remind myself of this little mantra that we have attempted to incorporate into our consciousness, as we go about God's ministry of good news, here on the corner of 9th and Washington. This good news can be a reminder and an encourager for any of us when we are engaged in our community values of:

Hospitality; Relational Connection; and Spiritual nurture.

Wherever we may find ourselves, the person across from us, in front of us, and/or even behind us, bears the image of God, is enough in God's eyes and is deeply loved. That includes the person staring back at you in the mirror. After all, we all have those days, and even weeks when we don't think we are enough, loved, and/or have anything resembling God, within us. So, whether as a reminder, as an encouragement, and/or a prayer as you start your day, KNOW, that you are wrapped in this good news message and that you are SEEN and LOVED, by God, and others!

This past year of 2025 seems to have come onto us like a whirlwind, and now it is almost gone. It has been another year of transition, of saying goodbye to love ones, to adapting and pivoting in different directions because, well, because life is never predictable or static. We are, after all, participants within God's ongoing and continuous story, and there are plenty of twists, turns, and surprises that we encounter. Life in God's community we call Oly First, is no different.

We began our year with a new governance model, a scaled down version of our older model, but hoping for more flexibility and adaptability as well as increased communication between leadership team leaders/members and the congregation. Also adopting a consensus centered decision-making process has made this new governance style a bit clunky, sort of like learning a new language. The good news is that our church is still standing, still involved in the mission and ministry that God has laid before us. Newer ministries like OPOP (One Parish-One Prisoner), World Relief move forward as we continue serving God and loving people alongside established

Continued on pg 2...

ministries such as Table Grace, American Baptist Women's Ministries, Widows group, Men's Ministries, etc.

For me, from my perspective, I continue to be amazed by you all. Your faithfulness, your servant hearts; your ability to roll with the unexpected hiccups we encounter. One of our major accomplishments this year was hosting the 2025 Annual Gathering of the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches, in October. This was a year-long commitment of preparation, cleaning, sprucing up, providing accessible spaces, forming teams of hospitality. From January until that weekend in October, there was some kind of planning, preparing, hands-on work being done, to get us ready to host. Big shout out to the primary Leadership Team of:

Rev. Joan Friesen, Jan Downen, and Meggin Turk!

I also think we rediscovered our ability to pull together and work as a team. The end of April began my journey with Cornelius, that annoying, little nodule in my left lung that turned out to be lung cancer. Thank goodness, and Praise God, that it was Stage 1, and even though a rare form of cancer, it was not aggressive and fast growing. That meant, there were a lot more trips to various doctors for me, and then more tests, a failed biopsy, and then, finally, surgery in August, followed by 6 weeks of at home medical leave. Through all of that you all, the Executive Leadership Team led by Sandi Swarthout, and Rev. Joan Friesen as Acting Pastor, continued to be the church on the corner of 9th and Washington. You continued to live out our values of hospitality, relational connection, and spiritual nurture. You continued being the hands, feet, and heart of Christ to others. So much uncertainty; so much worry with a bit of anxiety thrown into the mix, but you all worked together, stood-in-the-gap, for me and with me. Through it all, God was served, relied upon, and honored. You should feel good about it!

2026 is now on our horizon. If you stand on your tiptoes, you can see it. What now?

After much prayer, soul-searching, conversation with others, etc. this coming year we will focus on spiritual renewal and formation. Our values of relational connection and spiritual nurture are important, and at times, also awkward. The gospel is about relationships. Our relationship with God, in and through Christ. Whether strengthening established relationships within the church and/or building relationships with newer members and/or the people we are ministering with and too, we will look for opportunities to reinforce those relational connections.

Likewise, spiritual nurturing is intertwined with those relationships. Everything we do as a congregation, from worship, to the various ministries and ministry groups, to the teaching that takes place, have a spiritual formation component to it. Everything we do is to be Christ-centered, and then you add the unexpected and surprising addition of God's Holy Spirit and one can't help being spiritually formed and shaped. We want this coming year to be one of intentionality and discovery on how to open ourselves to being spiritually nurtured as well as finding ways to be a spiritual nurturer to others.

As always, the road ahead of us as we build upon our legacy/history, will be filled with smooth days as well as bumpy and unexpected ones. But, we move forward, together as we:

Walk Humbly, Love Completely, Live Differently!

Blessings and Joy!

Humble over Hype!

Pastor Mark (Rev)

Stewardship – Stepping into God’s Generosity

Is there ever a good time to talk about and ponder our giving? Talking about money is one of those topics that make people, at times, uncomfortable. Especially, it seems within a church setting. No one wants to feel like they are being guilted, shamed, manipulated, or handled, and certainly not around a subject that is personal and ultimately between that person and God.

Yet, we also live under certain realities. We have property and a building that we use as our base for mission and ministry into the world. That means we have utilities, water, maintenance to pay for as well as staff salaries, global servants to support, and the various ministries to our neighborhood and the extended communities around us. All of that takes faithful and committed giving by those who make up this community on the corner of 9th and Washington. It takes all of us, together, to extend to others the light of Christ as we offer hospitality, relational connection and spiritual nurture for any who are in need, want, and/or, both.

As we step into a new year, let me challenge, encourage, suggest a couple of things to prayerfully consider when it comes to your faithful giving for 2026.

If you are not someone who tithes and/or understands tithing, or wants to know how to get started, I’d encourage you to start by having a conversation with myself, and/or Jay Nordgaard, our Church Treasurer, and/or someone in the congregation you feel safe and comfortable with and talk with them about how they go about tithing/giving to the church. There is no better time, than now, to begin stepping into God’s generosity and figuring out how you can be generous yourself to what we are have been called to here at Oly First.

Next, if you are a regular tither/giver, would you consider increasing your giving by 1 to 3%, perhaps even a bit more? I know some of us are on more fixed incomes and that might not make it possible to increase our tithes by very much. That’s okay. We all have budgets that we are trying our best to maintain and honor. If, however, it is possible to increase your tithe, give it some thought and prayer and see what direction God’s Spirit nudges you toward. If you have the ability to give more, that would be a blessing. I think the point is that sometimes we limit ourselves when it comes to stepping into God’s spirit of generosity.

Whatever you decide, however you arrive at the decision(s) you make when it comes to your giving to the work of Christ here at Oly First, we will honor those choices as best we can. We are in this together. We need each other, praying, planning, serving, opening ourselves to God’s Spirit, God’s calling, as well as the people that God brings into our lives, individually and as a faith community.

We realize that the struggle can be real, for all of us, but again, we are in this together, under the banner of Jesus Christ and his light, love, and grace! Let us step into God’s generosity for 2026.

Blessings and Joy!

Pastor Mark

&

Executive Leadership Team

Save the Dates:

Saturday, January 10th, 9:30 a.m. – Church Undecorating

We will gather this Saturday morning to put away Christmas as we transition to the season of Epiphany and then Lent. We will once again be under the guidance and leadership of Sandy Grebbs. Let's have another good turnout as we put the Sanctuary and gathering spaces into a more familiar fashion.

Thursday Morning Bible Study returns on January 15th,

9:30 a.m. in Room 102. This will be a hybrid class for those who can join us in person as well as those who would like to join us on Zoom! If you are interested in being with us on Zoom, please let Pastor Mark know at:

markrambo44@gmail.com so that a Zoom link can be sent to you that week.

We will be studying the Letter to the Galatians as well as checking in on the gospel of Matthew, since that is the primary Gospel story for this coming year within the Lectionary.

Annual Meeting, Part 2 – Financial Ministry Plan

Sunday, January 18th, after the morning Worship Service, we will gather to go over the financial ministry plan for 2026, that has been forwarded for your consideration by the Stewardship Team and the Executive Leadership Team. Once again, there will be a time for questions after the presentation of the financial part of the Ministry Plan. We will also be using our new Consensus Model in determining if we will be adapting the plan as is.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration Service

Monday, January 19th, 1:00 p.m. at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship

19300 108th Ave SE, Renton, WA

(See insert for more information)

Saturday, January 31st – Table Conversations w/ Pastor Mark

10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room, we will have our first Table Conversation for you to come and ask questions about the Bible and/or other topics, issues, of faith, that you might have. We don't guarantee your questions will be answered completely, but we do want to create a safe space to ask and talk about the things around faith that might raise questions for us and/or that we might struggle with.



EVERGREEN ASSOCIATION
—OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA—

Note the earlier time!

and the



Invite you to join us for our annual **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration Service**

at the NBCF Worship & Family Life Center, 19300 108th Ave SE, Renton, WA



Monday, January 19th, 1 pm

"Striving to Become the Beloved Community"



**Our Featured Preacher is
Rev. Dr. Victoria Carr-Ware**

This year our preacher will be Rev. Dr. Victoria Carr-Ware, Senior Pastor of Queen Anne Baptist Church in Seattle, WA. She is an enthusiastic preacher, counselor, and educator who's committed to radical solidarity and belonging through the work of racial justice, gender justice, and LGBTQIA+ liberation. Prior to QABC, Pastor Victoria served as the Ecumenical and Multifaith Campus Minister at Seattle University and as Associate Pastor at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship.

**With music from the All Evergreen Choir
Lead by Min. Zhane Perez**

You can join in the All Evergreen Choir—all rehearsals at NBCF

To sign up for the Choir, click this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/ux9KneVEf9>

"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference, but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

-bell hooks, killing rage: Ending Racism

Please join us as we worship together and celebrate the life, legacy and vision of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This is always an excellent service, with amazing music, preaching and encouraging our Evergreen family as we strive together to become Dr. King's beloved community.

Evergreen is deeply grateful to our host for this event:



NEW BEGINNINGS
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



EVERGREEN ASSOCIATION
—OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA—
TRANSLATING OUR UNITY TO THE WORLD

2026 Annual Leadership Retreat February 5-7 at Camp Burton

9326 SW Bayview Dr, Vashon, WA 98070

February 21, Online on Zoom

Will run 9am to Noon

“Listening Together”

This year we’re going to be collaborating and learning together, and our focus will be hearing God and one another well. The Evergreen Staff, and Rev. Morgan Fletcher, our consultant for Well-Being for pastors and congregations, will be leading this time of searching for what God has placed before us, as churches and as the Evergreen Association.

In Person (2/5-7) Schedule

Thursday—Clergy Session

11am—Arrival & Registration

12:30pm—Lunch

1:30pm—First Session: Listening Well

3:30pm—Break/Free Time

5:30pm—Dinner

6:30pm—Second Session: Well-Being Personally and Congregationally

7:30pm—Free Time

Friday—Combine @ Lunch

8:30am—Breakfast

9:30am—Breakout Sessions

10:30am—Sharing Together

11am—Laity Arrival & Registration

12:30pm—Lunch—Laity join Clergy

1:30pm—Breakout: What are your churches

most concerned about?

2:30pm—Break/Free Time

5:30pm—Dinner

6:30pm—Evergreen Open Session—How does Evergreen Live This Moment?

7:30pm—Where do you see God at work?

Saturday—Combined Session

8:30am—Breakfast

9:30am—Clergy & Laity: What would you like to explore?

10:30am—Identifying Emerging Themes

11:30am—Caucus Connection

12:30pm—Lunch

1:30pm—Next Steps

2:30pm—Closing Reflection

3:00pm—Departure

Online (2/21) Schedule

9am—How can we be open to the Spirit?

10am—What’s on your spirit?

10:15am—Breakouts

10:45am—Break

11:00am—Report Back

11:45am—Next Steps and Closing

Register Now!

<https://forms.office.com/r/WvuXYaAzuH>

See other side for more information!



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Jean Heidal, Chair

Thank you to all who worked on the planning of our Christmas Brunch and to all who participated in the event! I heard lots of positive comments and how much it was enjoyed. Having said all that I think it would be good to spend some time at our January meeting exploring what worked and what we might do better next year. I hope you will join us on the 2nd Wednesday at noon.

As you know the brunch is our major fundraiser for the year and we cleared over \$2100! A lot of hard work went into making that amount and I am grateful to all who worked so hard

We are starting on our "britches for boys" project this year. If you would like to be involved see Jan Downen for the pattern.

Again, I am always grateful for the women and men who step up to support women's Ministries during the year. Thank you everyone!

THE DEACON'S CORNER

Pat Luhr

My mind goes to God's gifts and his many blessings this time of year and my heart is happy.

Pat Luhr

NIV

A NEW YEAR FORETOLD

This New Year has been foretold.
Your future is at hand.
God knows the fate and outcome
of each and every woman and man.

God has chosen the narrow road.
His wisdom is leading the way.
His great strength can carry your load.
His compassion you will feel every day.

With a new dawn over the horizon,
and the Lord to lead the way,
you can spread your wings like an eagle
and soar through every day.

Debra L. Brown. "A New Year Foretold." Family Friend Poems, January 1, 2019.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLYMPIA

PO BOX 533
OLYMPIA, WA 98507

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Olympia WA
Permit No. 198

Return Service Requested

Contact Information

360-357-3881
Email: olyfbc@aol.com
Web: fbcolympia.org

Church Staff

Rev. Mark Rambo, Senior Pastor
Jonathan Spatola-Knoll, Director of Music Ministries
Lela DePaolo, Secretary
Aaron Delaney, Interim Campus Maintenance

January 2025 • Sermons and Scriptures • Olympia First Baptist Church

Sunday, January 4th: Communion Sunday/
Second Sunday after Christmas
Sermon Text: John 1:1—18
Sermon Title: In Case you Don't Get It
Written Word: Ephesians 1:3—14
Written Word: Psalm 147:12—20

Sunday, January 11th: Epiphany –
Baptism of the Lord
Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13—17
Sermon Title: “Fulfill All Righteousness”
Written Word: Isaiah 42:1—9
Written Word: Psalm 29

Sunday, January 18th: 2nd Sunday of Epiphany/
MLK Jr. Sunday
Sermon Text: John 1:29—42
Sermon Title: The Dude
Written Word: I Corinthians 1:1—9
Written Word: Psalm 40:1—11

Sunday, January 25th: 3rd Sunday of Epiphany
Sermon Text: Matthew 4:12—23
Sermon Title: Multi-Tasking Jesus
Written Word: I Corinthians 1:10—18
Written Word: Psalm 27:1, 4—9

New Year Prayer

Dear God,

As we begin a new year, we ask for Your guidance and wisdom. We seek Your blessings as we set out to achieve our goals and dreams. Help us to stay focused on what is truly important, and to always remember the importance of Your love.

We pray for peace and healing in our world, and for an end to the hatred and violence that seems to be so prevalent. We ask that You bless those who are struggling, and give them the strength to carry on.

We give thanks for all the good things in our lives, and ask that You continue to bless us in the coming year. In Jesus' name, Amen.

