

**Olympia
First
Baptist
Church**

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**The Thin Place:
Where the Sacred and the Ordinary Collide**

For this month's Thin Place, I am providing my part of our recent, "State of the Church" gathering, that was held after the morning worship service on Sunday, July 26th. Since the majority of you who receive the Windows were not able to be there, we hope this will give you a comprehensive snapshot of where we've been, where we are currently, and where we hope to be going into that unknown future.

The other piece of news or update, that is alluded to at the end of this article, is that I will officially retire, on January 1st, 2029. Part of the near future, then, will be transitioning to new pastoral leadership. The good news is that your current church leadership team has already begun discussions about process, timelines, etc., as well as been in conversation with

Rev. Doug Avilesbernal, our Executive Minister for the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches (our Regional affiliate). My commitment to you all and to Oly First will stay grounded and intact, toward continuing our work of building a bridge into a healthy, proactive, sustainable future. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

State of the Church
July 26th, 2026

155

In October we will acknowledge & celebrate 155 years of mission and ministry here at Oly First.

Legacy – Presence – Spirit – Relationship – Hospitality – Service

In my mind, we are like any other church. We worship, we serve, we provide spiritual guidance, presence, wisdom; opportunities to know God, say yes to God, and to follow God out into the world through the Resurrected One, Jesus Christ.

What sets Oly 1st apart, in my mind, are these moments of stepping through the various doors that God's Spirit provided during those 155 years. This is our Legacy:

In 1879, Festus Campbell was called as Interim Pastor. Festus, African-American, was a former slave, who served the church for the next several months as their acting Pastor. In 1885, May Jones, who was ordained, was called to be Pastor and served the church in that capacity for the next 2 years. Think of that, an African-American, former slave and a woman, called to Pastor this fledgling church community before the turn of the 20th century. Surprise!

Continued...

In 1891, a Baptist Chinese school and Sunday school were established. In 1918, the church (Central Baptist at that time) opened a night school for Chinese immigrants, that later becomes a drop-in center for kids after school. In the 1950's and early '60's, the church sponsored 3-different sets of families, political refugees/immigrants from Eastern Europe living under the veil of Communist rule and oppression. In the 70's, a family from Vietnam came to live in what is now the Emmaus House. Doors open, God surprises, people respond. This legacy of welcome, connection and hospitality continue today, as we support, partner, serve, minister to and with World Relief and the families they help resettle here in Thurston County. To date, the church has hosted 9 families from 7 different countries. All of that is just a taste of the legacy of Oly First and it continues today with many of the community relationships we are building across our city as well as the ministry of Table Grace as we respond to the challenges of the houseless, the addicted and the ongoing issues around food scarcity.

We have committed ourselves to being a downtown, community-driven church, with all of the joys and challenges that that brings to our doors.

We stand behind our stated values of:

Hospitality – Relational Connections – Spiritual Nurture.

Those values are at the core of our ministry as the living presence of the One we follow, Jesus Christ. We reflect those lived values as a way of shining the light of Christ to others while providing a place of belonging, a spiritual oasis, if you will, where all are welcome, and all can drink and eat from God's Table and the living water of awe, wonder, and mystery the grace, reconciliation & redemption, found in Christ. What we do, ministry wise, people wise, community-wise is grounded in God's story. It is biblical. It is real. It is truth. Ours is grounded in Kindom, not Empire. Period.

But we aren't done yet. Not by a long-shot. I know that we have challenges. We are experiencing some of them already. We have lost dear ones these last 3 to 4 years. We feel those losses, relationally, spiritually, and yes, financially. But, their stories of faith and service live within this faith community and within us who knew them and loved them. Still love them. Their memory, their spirit is intertwined with the Spirit. They are our cloud of witnesses. And so, they cheer us on, approvingly, I hope.

We are building a bridge into an unknown future, but it is a bridge that is sustainable, flexible, adaptable, looking not at short-term fixes based on trends and fads, but innovative, practical, and prayer-filled practices that are, again, people-centered and focused. Why? Because people matter. People, made in God's image, enough in God's eyes and deeply loved are why we exist. Anything else and we're just blowing smoke and trying to look

good to others. We aren't building a brand, or a reputation, we are building a community, a Kindom-driven, Kindom-valued, Kindom driven community of inclusion, acceptance, belonging, where God's grace, redemption, and salvation are free for whoever is in need. We are a come and see community of Christ! If you were here last Sunday, we heard a story of inclusion, acceptance, belonging, grace, redemption... a coming out party! Yes!

We have a working group who is looking at long-term options to utilize our campus and existing property for future mission and ministries that can benefit both our church and the surrounding neighborhood. We have a team of people who are engaged with a denominational cohort that focuses on Stewardship as responding to God's Generosity. We have another team of people who are working with a Regional/Evergreen Cohort on Reimagining Community and Reimagining Telling Our Stories. We will continue to build relationships with a variety of people, churches, non-profits and organizations, creating partnerships and being a spiritual presence within those partnerships, projects, ministries, etc. The work of Christ continues within those partnerships, even though, at times, they will look different than what we might be accustomed to.

Last thing:

I am committed to you all, to Oly First, and building a sustainable, future, that is Christ-centered, Kindom-driven, and entrenched in the values we are committed to: Hospitality, Relational Connection, & Spiritual Nurture.

I am here, giving you all that I have in what is the last few years of my ministry career. So, when I retire we can, you can, be assured that your legacy, the ministry and mission we have established here on the corner of 9th and Washington, continues, can shift, pivot and change, as God's Spirit continues to open doors of connection and opportunity.

We are in good hands because God is Good – all the time – all the time – God is Good! The future is there for the taking. We got work to do, but it is a work of good news, hope, and love. God's abundant agape love.

155 years, and counting, into God's future for us all!

Blessings and Joy! – Humble over Hype!

Come and See!

Pastor Mark (Rev)

Spiritual Formation Survey

As we start putting together opportunities and studies for spiritual formation growth, the Community Engagement and Formation ministry team would like to get some feedback from the congregation about topics, issues, and/or specific books of the Bible, that you all are interested in. We want to be sure that whatever we offer has a good biblical foundation to it. Your input and interest goes a long way in helping us put things together that are beneficial and aligns with your spiritual interests.

For the most part, we are looking at smaller time commitments, 4—6 weeks, maybe a few more weeks, if the topic warrants it. We want to be flexible, but also realize that we have folks that are retired who have a bit more flexibility about where and when as well as people who are working (a variety of hours) and do not have as much flex as others. All we ask is that if you want to see us provide specific study/conversation/Q & A opportunities, that you also make a commitment to participate in those offerings.

Top 3 Topics/Studies of Interest:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Please indicate Day(s) and Time(s) that you would prefer, below.
We will do our best to take the info provided for scheduling purposes.
If you could also share your name with us, that would be helpful as well.

[Topics that have been kicked around so far (to give you an idea) has been Christian Nationalism; Baptist Distinctives (What makes a Baptist, a Baptist) and; Character of God. Again, if one of these is of interest or in your top 3, please include them above.]

Save the dates:

Taste of Evergreen

Saturday, August 8th, '26 – 12:00 to 2:30 p.m.

Please join us for the Taste of Evergreen - a fun time of cultural learning, sharing food, and of course, our awesome dessert auction.

Tickets are \$20 for 13 years and up, and \$10 for children \$12 and under.

All proceeds benefit the Evergreen Association.

New Beginnings Christian Fellowship

19300 108th Ave SE, Kent, WA 98031

Olympia First Baptist Hosts a Block Party (Part 2)

Saturday, August 29th, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

More details to come.

Baby Shower for Lala Gonzales

Monday, August 31st, 6:00 p.m. at Olympia First

Amazon registry – Lala Gonzales

RSVP with Emily Blair or Jan Downen

Emily Blair – 360-556-2714 or blueheroneb@hotmail.com

Jan Downen – 360-529-2013 or cjdownen2@comcast.net

Camp Bethel Fundraiser – Saturday, September 5th

Hosted by Olympia First Baptist Church

(See the more detailed Flyer in this edition of the Windows)

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Remembering Lura Belle Anderson



Lura Belle passed away on July 9th, 2026.

Lura was a former member & she was loved by all her friends here at Olympia First Baptist Church. Lura was 95.

She was know for loving the color red and sporting a lovely red hat when coming to church services.

She had moved from Olympia to Everett to be close to her daughter Marie Preskitt.

Cards of condolences can be sent to:

5603 Sound Ave., Everett, WA 98203

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Day Camp – Recap

The Olympia Commons Day Camp was held at the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church campus the week of July 20 – 24, was a HUGE success! The staff of 80-ish persons helped over 50+ children to explore key Christian themes and share in fellowship with each other as they played, created memories and learned about ways to share with each other the teachings of Jesus.

Our Olympia First Baptist was well represented as Pat DeNeui spent the week with all ages, organizing daily recreational activities and leaving them happy and brainstorming new ideas for activities! On Wednesday, Pastor Mark was the Story teller all day, Sandy Grebbs led all ages in crafts that morning and Meggin help in the kitchen with snacks and lunch prep. Patti Luhr joined in the afternoon and helped *shepherd* all the groups as they went from activity to activity.

The week was a beautiful Ecumenical Movement and hopefully will be an annual event for the younger ones. The Olympia Commons group should be proud of this endeavor!

Meggin Turk, Scribe



DEACON'S THOUGHTS

Kat Stoker

Imagine if our eyes were healed and we no longer saw others merely as family, friends, strangers, and enemies. Imagine if our eyes could see each and every person as a precious neighbor. As C. S. Lewis argues, “There are no ordinary people. . . . Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

What if we embraced this sacred vision of the other? What if—before we apply any label, any category, any “us” or “them” to anyone—we simply saw one another as our *neighbors*? This is a universal moral vision that draws the golden circle of belonging around everyone and excludes none. In this healing movement, all reality and the universe itself become a shared moral neighborhood energized with love, justice, and flourishing for all.

This is our humanity’s shared hope in our age of othering mutilated by preference, privilege, and power. I can no longer label, overlook, or attack any other because I live in the presence of my neighbor. Life becomes transfigured and astonishing: everywhere I go, I find neighbors. There are no longer any nobodies, no longer any invisible objects or valueless enemies.

Mother Teresa said, “The world has never had such a need for love as it has today.” I share her conviction and believe that Martin Luther King Jr. was also right: “This love might well be the salvation of our civilization. . . . Love is ultimately the only answer to mankind’s problems. . . . He who has love has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality.” Neighbor love makes humanity shimmer and shine in full color like precious diamonds as if for the first time. How was it that I went through life and couldn’t see the glory all around and within me? I am born again, and neighbor love sets me free.



2026 CALENDAR

SPRING CRAFT RETREAT

APRIL 24-26

Bring your craft project!

Director: Rona Schroeder

Fee: \$175

MEMORIAL DAY WORK WEEKEND

MAY 22-25

A volunteer opportunity!

Director: Bob Holcomb

Fee: \$0

SR. HIGH CAMP

JULY 12-18

Grades: 9th - Grad

FEE: \$375 Early Reg
\$400 Walk-In

Director: Delynnia Woitt

JR. HIGH CAMP

JULY 19-25

Grades: 6th - 8th

FEE: \$375 Early Reg
\$400 Walk-In

Director: TBA

ELEMENTARY CAMP

JULY 26-30

Grades: 3rd - 5th

FEE: \$300 Early Reg
\$325 Walk-In

Director: Dan Todd

SR. ADULT CAMP

SEPT. 14-17

Ages: 18 - 99+
All are welcome!

FEE: \$195

Director: TBA

FAMILY FISHING WEEKEND

OCTOBER: 2-4

Fun For The Whole Family!

Director: Jeff Scott

Fee: \$175

CHRISTMAS CRAFT RETREAT

NOV. 20-22

Bring Your Christmas Craft!

Director: Lori Brandt

Fee: \$175

TURKEY DAY REVIVAL

NOV. 27-29

For Middle & High School Youth

Director: Micah and Jodi Hammond

FEE: \$125

REGISTER TODAY!

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www.campbethel.net / contact@campbethel.net / (360)289-3444



Camp Bethel's Fall Family "Fun"draiser

Saturday, September 5th, 2026 • 2pm - 6pm

Hosted by Olympia First Baptist Church

904 Washington St SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Join us for an evening of fall fun for the whole family!

Donations Are
Tax Deductible!

 Dinner - (\$25 Donation)

 Silent Auction

 Games

 Bake Sale

 Bring your dollar bills for games!
BINGO, Left-Right-Center, and more!

RSVP Appreciated

contact@campbethel.net

or

360-289-3444





Camp Bethel's Family Fishing WEEKEND

October 2-4, 2026

Fun For the Whole Family!

Director: Jeff Scott

\$175 per person

REGISTER TODAY!

(360) 289-3444 | contact@campbethel.net

347 Kirkpatrick Rd, Hoquiam WA 98550

Follow Us



AUGUST SUNDAY SCHEDULE: 8:30 am Sunday School, 10am Worship, Child Care & Nursery, 3:00pm Table Grace					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
UPCOMING: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 14TH CHAIR YOGA BEGINS AGAIN CHOIR STARTS AGAIN MID SEPTEMBER					
2	3	4	5	6	7
10:00 am Communion Sunday Worship Service	7:00-9:30 pm Voices of the Sound Fellowship Hall, Rm 102, Fireside Room	11:00am-1pm Lions Club Fireside Room	11:15 Staff Meeting	9:30 am TOPS Rm. 102	Begins at 6:30 p.m. World Relief Fund Raiser @ Hands-On Children's Museum
9	10	11	12	13	14
10:00 am Worship Service	7:00-9:30 pm Voices of the Sound Fellowship Hall, Rm 102, Fireside Room	11:00am-1pm Lions Club Fireside Room 5:30 pm Woodturners Fellowship Hall	11:15 Staff Meeting	9:30 am TOPS Rm. 102	
16	17	18	19	20	21
10:00 am Worship Service After Church: Executive Leadership Team <u>WINDOWS</u> <u>DEADLINE</u>	7:00-9:30 pm Voices of the Sound Fellowship Hall, Rm 102, Fireside Room	11:00am-1pm Lions Club Fireside Room 6:30pm Stewardship Team Rm 102	11:15 Staff Meeting	9:30 am TOPS Rm. 102 1:00 pm Ladies Luncheon At Rivers Edge	ICG POTLUCK! @ Pat DeNeui's 4:30 pm-6:15 pm
23	24	25	26	27	28
10:00 am Worship Service	7:00-9:30 pm Voices of the Sound Fellowship Hall, Rm 102, Fireside Room	11:00am-1pm Lions Club Fireside Room 5:00 pm Deacon's Meeting Fireside Room	11:15 Staff Meeting	9:30 am TOPS Rm. 102	4:00 - 6:00 pm OFBC Block Party @Oly First
30	31				
10:00 am Worship Service	7:00-9:30 pm Voices of the Sound Fellowship Hall, Rm 102, Fireside Room				

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLYMPIA

PO BOX 533
OLYMPIA, WA 98507

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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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

August Sermons – Ordinary Time – 2026 – Olympia First Baptist Church

Sunday, August 2nd:

Sermon Title: Come and Get It!
Sermon Text: Matthew 14:13—21
Written Word: Isaiah 55:1—5
Written Word: Psalm 145:8—9, 14—21

Sunday, August 9th:

Sermon Title: Walk this Way! Talk this Way!
Sermon Text: Matthew 14:22—33
Written Word: Romans 10:15—25
Written Word: Psalm 85:8—13

Sunday, August 16th:

Alternate Worship – The Stories that We Tell
Reading 1 – Isaiah 56:1, 6—8
A House (of Prayer) for all People

Prompt: When the prophet says “**maintain justice**,”
what does JUSTICE mean to you? What do
you think the prophet Isaiah means by justice?

Reading/Story – Matthew 15: (10—20), 21—28

Prompt 1 – What sort of things come out of
people’s mouths that defile others?

Continued...

Can you share a story of your heart controlling
your mouth, both for good and/or not so good
purposes?

Prompt 2 – Can you share a story of
perseverance of faith, that took the high
ground, like the Canaanite woman does with
Jesus?

Sunday, August 23rd:

Sermon Title: Faith – Part 1
Sermon Text: Matthew 16:13—20
Written Word: Isaiah 51:1—6
Written Word: Psalm 138

Sunday, August 30th:

Sermon Title: Faith – Part 2
Sermon Text: Matthew 16:21—28
Written Word: Romans 12:9—21
Written Word: Psalm 26:1—8