

# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLYMPIA

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MARCH

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2023

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The Thin Place:

Where the Sacred and the Ordinary Collide

***You are dust, re-created in the image of God. Go in peace.***

We concluded our time of worship on Ash Wednesday by placing the sign of the cross, in ashes, on the foreheads of those who chose to do so. As I made that sign of the cross,

I shared this powerful reminder of who we were and who we are now. From dust to this re-imagined, re-created image of God's goodness, creativity and love.

From dust to Beloved!

For me, that's pretty powerful...as a metaphor and as a reality I share with others.

We find ourselves, once again, in the beginning stages of our journey with Jesus of Nazareth, we call the season of Lent. As was shared in Thoughts and Things last week:

***Lent is a forty-day observance that honors the season of wilderness experienced by Christ and his ancestors. In Lent, we make space for grief, our own interior dissonance. And we commit ourselves to bearing witness to the suffering of the world. In many Christian traditions, Lent is a season to choose a desire or habit to give up as a kind of sacrifice in solidarity with Christ and the suffering. But we can also consider taking up a new practice for collective good.***

***What is a habit you can commit to in solidarity with those suffering?***

***How will we bear witness to the dust?***

I never imagined that one day I would get to a place/space in my life when I would ponder about the meaning of "dust." But this season of Lent, it weighs heavy on my mind. I know part of it has to do with my grieving process over Roy Spaulding's graduation into God's presence. But as I share the words with you now as well as when I spoke them to the individuals who came forward on Ash Wednesday, what does it mean, symbolize, shed light on?

Dust is something that is all around us. It's in the air we breathe. It accumulates in corners, under things. It settles on bookshelves, window sills, and door frames. It is a constant reality that we take for granted, until we don't or encounter it in surprising ways.

You and I, according to the Creation stories in Genesis, were created out of this ordinary, everyday substance that God took and made something good, out of. It's supposed to be a reminder, I think, that God's story, our story with God, begins with blessing, with goodness, with love. From a humble, inconsequential material, annoying even, God molds, shapes, repurposes and re-imagines these dust particles into the re-created image of God – you and me, us, humankind.

From Dust to Beloved! That's a journey worth taking.

Continued on page 2...

## March 2023 • Sermons and Scriptures • Olympia First Baptist Church

### Sunday, March 5th Second Sunday of Lent

Text: John 3:1–17  
Sermon: Nic at Night  
We come to God depending on our need, our circumstances, our heart...Nicodemus' story shows us one such path...  
Rev. Mark Rambo

### Sunday, March 12th Third Sunday of Lent

Text: Exodus 17:1–7  
Sermon: Is God Among Us or Not?  
A question that is asked in good times and not so goodtimes...  
Rev. Mark Rambo

### Sunday, March 19th—Fourth Sunday of Lent

Text: Ephesians 5:8–14  
Sermon: Did Someone say Light?  
It seems easier to focus on what ails us, our neighbors, our world, rather than remembering and living out the light we have been given...  
Rev. Mark Rambo

### Sunday, March 26th – Fifth Sunday of Lent

Text: Ezekiel 37:1–14  
Sermon: Dead and Buried  
Whether a vision about "dry bones," or a dear friend in burial clothes, new life is all around us, getting ready to break out...and surprise us, again, and again, and again.  
Rev. Mark Rambo



*Thin Place continued ...*

Yet, in spite of our humble beginnings and God's intention and want for us to live in the fullness of God's love, and relational mutuality, God's story with us becomes broken and the reality of sin, suffering, pain and death enter. Now dust takes on a different feel, a different emphasis. It's that annoying side of my life. The things, behaviors, impulses, attitudes that seek to hide in corners and under the furniture/carpet. The dust is my brokenness that lands in so many different places, some that even makes one exclaim, "how did it get there?"

Again, for me, part of my journey during Lent is to acknowledge this side of "dust." To look at myself and the world around me, for what it is: A Hot Mess. Once I can own that, acknowledge that within myself, then I can identify with suffering that happens around me. I can become more empathetic to those who experience suffering and injustice much, much more than I ever will or know. That too is what Lent offers us. The other side of being dust.

We hold both of these truths in tension with one another. Dust as the material God uses to make us in God's own image and dust that reflects our brokenness and how we try to ignore it and/or hide it – from ourselves and others, including God.

Good news? We are not alone on this journey. We follow the One, the Beloved One, who came up out of the waters and heard the voice of the Creator:

***You are my Child, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life!***

Who then is driven, by the Spirit, into the wilderness. Who for the next 40 plus days, will ask us to follow; to deal with this tension of being dust – to deal with our re-created image and our brokenness – that gives us hope and distress – good news and grace.

We have Jesus and we have one another.

***You are dust, re-created in the image of God. Go in peace.***

Blessings and Joy!

Humble over Hype!

Pastor Mark (Rev)

## OFBC Church Notices



***Roy Spaulding***

(September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940 – February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023)

A Memorial/Celebration of Life for Roy Spaulding will be Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.

You are encouraged to come and surround Freda, and daughters Beth & Jenny, with your presence and love.

There will be a Reception downstairs in the Fellowship Hall after the service.

You are encouraged to bring cards of condolences with you as well as any written words of comfort, memories, stories, photos, etc., with you.

There will be a Tribute Wall where they can be placed on. The intention is to produce a Memory Book for Freda, Beth, and Jenny.



***Happy Anniversary!***

Rex & Julie Comstock are celebrating their 71st Wedding Anniversary on March 28<sup>th</sup>!



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## AMERICA FOR CHRIST OFFERING

Your gifts to the **America for Christ Offering** impact thousands – through ministries with marginalized children, mission trips that transform lives torn asunder by hurricanes, resources that cultivate Christian leaders, chaplains who bring comfort to hospitals and nursing homes, and much more. Two-thirds of received offerings are directed to the American Baptist Home Mission Societies and one-third are directed to the ABC regional office of the giving church. This offering is promoted in February-March. *Let us not become weary in doing good!*

**John 1:16-17 (NRSVue)**

From his fullness we have all received, GRACE UPON GRACE. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

## Grace UPON Grace America for Christ Offering 2023

### First Baptist Comunidad Cristiana– Agape Youth Center, Yakima, WA

As one Agape fifth grader put it: “Agape has helped me with academics most of all. It has also helped me to become a better person. It has given me backpacks and produce. Agape has helped me to understand life in many ways and to appreciate what I have. My Agape counselors have taught me respect and to be myself. Agape has always been there for me and always will. They have always taught me to have faith in myself no matter what.”

The Agape Youth Center Summer Program is a free STEAM-based program for first through fifth graders sponsored by a non profit organization called Schools Out Washington. The program focuses on creatively teaching science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. Our vision is to encourage learning and growth in character, education, and physical health by providing a safe, caring, fun environment combined with high-quality teaching. We desire that our children grow into future leaders who bring positive impact to their communities.

Our program has certified teachers who bring the STEAM subjects to life, as well as fun games and water play; plus, a lunch/snack is provided!

To help support the Agape Youth Center, donate generously to the 2023 America for Christ Offering.



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A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to our playground equipment project at Camp Bethel. We don't have an exact/final number as yet, but are assured the amount is well over \$3000. We will get the money to the camp as soon as the books close on February giving. The women are so excited that the playground will become a reality. It was a real treat to have Katie Daroff join us for our February meeting. Many good things are happening at camp and it was good to hear that there is advanced planning for projects and programs!

On march 8th Rev. Mylinda Baits will join us and talk about her recent trip with Emily Blair to Ecuador and the Amazon. Who did they see? What did they do? What are American baptists doing there? We will find out in March! All women of the church are invited to our meetings..

We are certainly missing our dear friend of Women's Ministries, Roy Spaulding. He was always willing to jump in and help wherever needed. Did he wash dishes? Yes! Did he fix and build things for the kitchen? Yes! Did he help moving heavy boxes or other items? Yes!

Roy was always willing to help with whatever the women needed. Rest in heaven, dear friend, you have earned it!

## DEACON’S BOARD

by Emily Blair

Here are some of the questions that I have since my trip to Ecuador. I am sharing my struggle with you.

What do I say about an experience that changes my world view? I believe in a God that sees me as beautiful, beloved and enough. That loves me no matter what I say, do or feel. This is how I am suppose to treat others the way that God treats me.

I look around me and what do I see? Do we see others? Do we use them for our own benefit? Do we see them and their way of life as important as ours? Do we use their resources and look the other way so we feel its okay to treat them as “others”? When they need our help, how do we respond?

People from other cultures don’t want us to transform their lives, to make them like us. They want their way of life and knowledge about how they see the world and what they know to be true to be respected. They have so much to teach us. They have accumulated so much knowledge that they can share with us if we will listen. I wish everyone could go out into the world and experience the beauty of another’s way of life. To be able to see the “others” and experience the awe-inspiring love and knowledge they have. It would change you forever. I just hope when Mylinda and I get to share with you that we can do them justice.

## Lenten Opportunities Revisited

### ***Water and Spirit – Devotions for Lent – 2023***

I was surprised and encouraged at how many of you chose to take and use the devotional booklet, “Water and Spirit.” We ordered 55 copies, which I was afraid we had overestimated on. But much to my surprise, and delight, every single one was taken.

If you had wanted one of these devotions, you can order them on Amazon. They are \$3. We hope that you can use them as you develop a consistent rhythm that feeds your soul this season of Lent.

Parents – If you have one of the Water and Spirit Devotions, in this edition of the Windows, you will find a Drawing Prompt resource that you can use with your children that coincides with the devotions in the booklet. This is one way to incorporate a family activity within Lent, that can lead to conversations about Jesus, etc.

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### ***Complicated Questions and Creative Explorations of Scripture***

This class, led by Gary and Mylinda Baits, will interact with a variety of biblical passages, digging deeply into their contexts, asking tough questions, and considering what they may be saying to our current context and to us as people of faith. You will use your senses and employ a variety of art forms to interact with scripture in ways that move you/us beyond mere head knowledge. You don’t need to be a “biblical scholar” or an “artist” to be a part of this adventure.

The class takes place after the morning Worship service, downstairs in the Fireside Room.

There will be some kind of shared food as well.

The class will run for 6-weeks, February 26<sup>th</sup>—April 2<sup>nd</sup>!

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### ***Thursday Morning Bible Study***

Every Thursday morning, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30-ish a.m., you are invited to join us downstairs in the Fireside Room, live and in-person. We also make this time of study available on the livestream using Facebook Live on the Oly First Baptist (Community) Group Page.

For Lent, we are currently working our way through:

**The Sermon on the Mount,**

Matthew, Chapters 5 through 7.

Whatever way you choose to join in, is great! If you’ve never been a “study” person, you might find this a challenge, but we work hard to make it conversational and open to different insights.

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### ***Prayer Retreat***

Presently, we have no plans to hold our annual prayer retreat. In the past, we usually started the season of Lent, out at Camp Bethel, to prepare us spiritually and relationally for the 40-plus day journey with Jesus. Last year, we held the retreat after Lent/Easter as a way to reflect upon any insights we might have had during that time. If you have any interest in participating in a similar retreat experience at Camp Bethel, a Friday night to Saturday dinner timeframe, please let Pastor Mark know. If there is sufficient interest, we will contact the camp and set up a retreat date as a way to reflect upon our Lenten experiences.

## Spiritual Formation & Nurturing During Lent

You are invited, as part of our Lenten emphasis, to join Gary and Mylinda Baits, at 11:30 a.m. to unravel:

### ***COMPLICATED QUESTIONS AND CREATIVE EXPLORATIONS OF SCRIPTURE***

***We will interact with a variety of biblical passages, digging deeply into their contexts, asking tough questions, and considering what they may be saying to our current context and to us as people of faith. We will use our senses and employ a variety of art forms to interact with the scriptures in ways that move us beyond mere head knowledge. You don’t need to be a “biblical scholar” or an “artist” to be a part of this adventure.***

The class will run for **6-weeks, from Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup> through April 2<sup>nd</sup>**, after the morning worship service. There is also a strong possibility of a bit of lunch being part of the experience as well. If you have any questions, please contact Gary and/or Mylinda.

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### **Up-coming virtual journeys are sponsored by the Short-Term Mission desk: Mission Express**

**Since June 2020, 1-Day, 3-Day or 5-Day virtual ministry immersion trips have been life sustaining for many of our global servants and partners around the globe.**

**On March 15, 2023 from Noon till 1:15pm(EST)**, you will have an opportunity to experience a unique ministry with **Rev. Mylinda Baits, Bilingual Global Consultant in Training and Capacity Building.**

Have you ever wondered how art and play can be used for ministry, healing and holistic missions? Ever considered how God might be inviting you to use your own creativity for good in the world? If these questions have piqued your interest or made you curious in any way, please join Mylinda Baits, IM’s Global Consultant for Training using the Restorative Arts, for a 90-minute virtual mission immersion into her ministry with our global friends and family. **On March 15, 2023 at Noon (EST)**, gather up and bring a few simple items like copy paper, colored markers, crayons or pencils, and string or yarn to use as we explore, experience and expand our perspectives together. We will learn about and connect with Mylinda’s global restorative ministry and partners through observation, listening, play, creation, reflection, expression and sharing. Come and see what the Lord can do with the resources right at our fingertips.

Please send an email to [volunteers@internationalministries.org](mailto:volunteers@internationalministries.org) to register for this unique virtual ministry experience. A special zoom link will be sent to you to confirm your registration. **Registration closes on March 6, 2023.**