

**Olympia
First
Baptist
Church**

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

“I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

Amos 5:21—25

New Revised Standard Version

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to –

Do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6—8

New Revised Standard Version

We start this month of February with uncomfortable reminders that God has some expectations for us as followers of the Holy One, Jesus Christ. God, from the beginning of God’s story has sought and prioritized relationship with you and me, with us, humankind, in all of our beauty and brokenness. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is based upon grace and forgiveness. BUT, with those wonderful gifts, come an ethic of love that is hard, intentional, and comes with sacrifice. The prophets of old, like Amos and Micah, above, spoke of faith that was not pleasing to God. A faith that was shallow, easy, word-oriented but not put into actual practice in one’s everyday life. It’s easy to rely upon ritual, worship rituals, songs, showing up to worship once in a while, etc., to make ourselves believe we are in right relationship with God and others. But God is not interested in easy. God asks of us something deeper, challenging, and life-giving. Not just for ourselves, but for all people. For creation itself.

God is interested in justice, but much more than just interested! There is an expectation that when we encounter injustice, we try, we attempt, to make those injustices right. To align them to God’s heart and desire for all people. To be a people who attempt each and every day to reflect and live out the beauty and simplicity of Micah’s challenging words:

Do justice, love kindness (mercy in other translations), and to walk humbly with God!

Continued on pg 2...

Thin Place cont...

We are living in times where living out the words above seem impossible. It feels, for me, what it must be like for the salmon as they swim upstream to arrive at their destination, their home, their breeding ground. Tiring, challenging, relentless. Exhausting. I don't see a reward ahead. It seems as if the powers-that-be hold all the cards. That we are at their mercy. That we are voiceless. That we are powerless.

And then...I remember. You and I, we, serve a God that says justice and righteousness (right relationship with God and others) can flow like rivers, like overflowing streams of relentless water! I remember the power of resurrection, of new life, new possibilities, the second, third, and infinite chances we have and receive because the Gospel of Jesus Christ IS about grace and forgiveness. We serve and are in relationship with a God who makes all things new. Each of us has a story, where God made God's Self known to us in some way that keeps us grounded in that relationship. That's what makes us prisoners of Hope. The Hope that Christ brought and brings into our world, each and every day. It is that hope, that helps us persevere forward, even when the world around us is on fire.

We have heard the call of Christ to "follow me."

That "following" includes working for justice, to make things right when they have gone off-track; when it is not reflective of who Christ is and what Christ taught and what Christ stands for. And we do so by walking humbly, loving completely, and living differently. It is hard. It takes intention and courage. It takes grace.

Let justice flow!

Be a justice person, who lives with kindness and mercy for others,
and walks humbly with God!

Blessings and Joy!
Humble over Hype!

Pastor Mark (Rev)

February – Black History Month

In recognition of Black History month, I read each year,
one of my favorite books:

Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?

by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



This was the last published book written by Dr. King before his assassination. This book, for me, underscores the prophetic nature of Dr. King's life. This was the first place where I encountered the word **apartheid**, and what that entailed and meant. Remember, this was published in 1968, a dozen or more years **before** we would recognize and push back on this system of separation and oppression in South Africa, in the 1980's. That's pretty prophetic, in my mind. Dr. King's advocacy was grounded in his calling as a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to see each person as a child of God, made in God's image and to be treated accordingly, with dignity and respect. I highly recommend it.

There are other African-American writers that you can read in order to be inspired, challenged, made a bit uncomfortable, as well as entertained. From novels to short stories and essays to poetry, theology, etc., there is plenty to choose from as a way of recognizing, affirming, and/or stand in solidarity with the contributions, history, and barriers that African-Americans have overcome as well as still experiencing in our society today.



If reading is not your thing. Maybe explore some of the artwork of African-American painters, sculptors and the like. **Jacob Lawrence** is one of my personal favorites when it comes to paintings. If you don't know where to begin, just use google and then do some exploring.

If you're looking for something more spiritual and contemporary, take a look at a young woman – **Cole Arthur Riley** – a wonderful writer and poet.



I hope you will take advantage of using this month of February to connect and/or reconnect with the contributions and gifts given to us by African-Americans!



Season of Lent, 2026:

Lent – Wednesday, February 18th – Thursday, April 2nd
Good Friday – April 3rd
Easter Sunday – April 5th

Ash Wednesday Service, Wednesday, February 18th, @ 6:30 p.m.

Lenten Photo-a-Day Activity – Feb. 18 to April 2nd

Holy Week – March 29th thru April 4th

Maundy Thursday Service, Thursday, April 2nd, @ 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday, TBA, April 3rd

Easter – Resurrection Sunday, April 5th, @ 10:00 a.m.

Keep the above dates in mind and/or put them on your calendars now!

The Season of Lent is fast approaching and we are still in the process of planning and putting the pieces together as part of our ministry of spiritual formation here at Oly First.

We will start off Lent with an Ash Wednesday service on February 18th, 6:30 p.m., in the Sanctuary. This will be a worship experience of reflection, song, scripture, connection as well as the imposition of ashes for those who choose them to be placed on their foreheads. We hope you will join us as we begin our Lenten journey toward Jerusalem and the Cross, with Jesus.

We also will have for you (those who choose to participate) a calendar for the Photo-a-Day Lenten Journey. Each day, from February 18th thru April 2nd, you will find a word for that day. Find and post a picture that reflects that word to you. No explanation is necessary. You can post on your own Instagram page and/or on the Oly First Baptist (Community), Facebook page.

During Holy Week, we will be having a Maundy Thursday service, on April 2nd, at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary, with Communion, scripture, and reflection.

Last thing in the works is implementing a Visual Stations of the Cross, courtesy of the Christian media group, Busted Halo, that you can access thru YouTube. We will have more information and links for you as we get closer to Holy Week, March 29th thru April 3rd!

As we put the finishing touches on the opportunities available for you to access this season of Lent, look for more specific information as it becomes available!



What are we looking toward in 2026?

One of the areas that our Executive Leadership Team and your Pastor want to improve on, going forward, is more consistent communication and transparency. With that in mind, here are some of the goals we will be working towards in 2026:

- *Strengthening our relational connections within Oly First and with others outside our church community.

- *Learning how to be more intentional in nurturing one another, spiritually.
(Part of the spiritual formation process)

- *Continue to explore how best to enhance our property as a base for mission and ministry that would benefit not only Oly First, but the surrounding neighborhood as well.

- *Developing a unified and comprehensive Visual Logo —messaging, that conveys our purpose and values as a faith community to those outside our church.

- *Explore partnerships with those within the wider community for the common good of the community. For example: The City's development plans for the **Rebecca Howard Park**, just down the block from us, 9th & Adams, that honors her accomplishments as a black businesswoman, as well as celebrating Black history and the contributions of African-Americans through art, storytelling, and community connections.

Many of the items listed above are already in process, and there will be more information and updates as things develop and begin to take shape and form.

Within this edition of the February Windows, you will find information about upcoming gatherings that are connected with the first two goals listed above:

Relational connections and spiritual nurture. Check them out!

Intergenerational Community Gathering (ICG)

Saturday, February 28th, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

We hope you will join us for our first Intergenerational Community Gathering of 2026, on Saturday, February 28th, from 4:30-6:30 p.m.!

We will gather in the Fireside Room. Chef Ricky Bowman is putting together our menu and whatever Rick crafts for us will be marvelous!

Two of our goals for this coming year is to strengthen our relational connections with one another and to learn and practice being more intentional in nurturing one another, spiritually. This first ICG is an attempt to put those goals into practice.

Besides a delicious meal, we will also have a time of worship music, intergenerational activities that reflect both this coming season of Lent as well as one or two of the ways we are trying to connect with folks outside the church, with the Front porch Prayer Station, the Lending Library, as well as Table Grace.

We hope you will make this gathering a priority as we grow together spiritually and relationally!

Ongoing Conversations:

Exploring partnership in ministry with True Life Church
A Joint Baptism experience on Sunday, February 22nd,
at 12:15 p.m., in the Sanctuary of Olympia First.

True Life will be baptizing a number of their folks and Pastor Mark will be baptizing Aaron Delaney, our Interim Campus Maintenance staff person.

Davis Hylkema and Wendy Wilson are taking point in the conversation and working agreement between Oly First and True Life church, for sharing and using Oly First as a base of worship, ministry and mission for the congregation of True Life.

As those discussions and agreements become more focused, we will continue to update you and keep you informed. Remember, God's Spirit is full of surprises!

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Jean Heidal, Chair

We had a great meeting in January. We reviewed our giving for the past 2 years and then looked at ministries and ministries to support this year. At this point we are lending financial support to:

Camp Bethel

Our 3 global servants

LaDarion Roberts

We also have a new project of "Britches for Boys.". If you would like to make some of these shorts contact Jan Downen, who has patterns and material. This will be our main focus but we will add other projects along the way.

There's room for more women in our group and we would love to have you join us!

THE DEACON'S CORNER

Meggin Turk

Agape Love

We hear Pastor Mark talk about AGAPE LOVE throughout the year!

This month of February makes me want to define that LOVE and send it out!

Agape Love is unconditional love of God and all other beings. It is the HIGHEST form of love and is characterized by goodwill, sacrifice, and seeking the well-being of others without expecting anything in return. It is a love that we can hardly comprehend but it is the love that God has for us and as Christians, we try to follow the word of God and do the best we can. We try to forgive, to love, and to have hope. Since we're human, we're not perfect, but we try.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Be grateful always for the love of God!
Keep Shining your love and sprinkle kindness all over the world!

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Lela DePaolo, Secretary
Aaron Delaney, Interim Campus Maintenance

February 2026 • Sermons and Scriptures • Olympia First Baptist Church

Sunday, February 1st: 4th Sunday of Epiphany
Sermon Text: Matthew 5:1–12
Sermon Title: A Code of Ethics to Live By
Written Word: Micah 6:1–8
Written Word: Psalm 15

Sunday, February 8th: 5th Sunday of Epiphany
Sermon Text: Matthew 5:13–20
Sermon Title: Ethics, Part 2
Written Word: I Corinthians 2:1–12 (13-16)
Written Word: Psalm 112:1–9 (10)

Sunday, February 15th: Transfiguration Sunday–Epiphany
Sermon Text: Matthew 17:1–9
Sermon Title: It's All a Haze
Written Word: Exodus 24:12–18
Written Word: Psalm 99

Wednesday, February 18th: Ash Wednesday
Homily Text: Matthew 6:1–6, 6–21
Homily Title: Same Time, Next Year
Written Word: Psalm 51:1–17
Written Word: 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

Sunday, February 22nd: First Sunday of Lent
Sermon Text: Matthew 4:1–11
Sermon Title: Long Obedience in the
Same Direction
Written Word: Romans 5:12–19
Written Word: Psalm 32

LOVE
God
LOVE
People