



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

Evergreen Notes

With What Shall I Come?



By Rev. Doug Avilesbernal

**“With what shall I come before the
Lord...**

**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 6:8

“With what shall I come before the
Lord?”

I recently saw a podcasting alleged pastor say that empathy is hurting us all. Someone claiming to be a Christian said that one of Jesus’ core messages is hurtful to our country. Like him, there are too many among us claiming to be Christians telling us that hate and cruelty are simply justice and when done to the “other.” All while ignoring blatant lying, hurting, abusing and more from people they agree with. There is very little that is Christian in our current public discourse and less still from the political centers of power.

All of it makes it clear that very few of us are asking the question in Micah. We have drifted so far that fear leads and shapes what we believe about Jesus and the Gospel. Many of us no longer care for reason and would rather suffer than admit the people we admire and even worship might be wrong.

“With what shall I (we) come before the Lord?”

I will spend the next three articles for our newsletter in the three

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<i>Photo credits this issue: Min. Kurt Kaufman, Rev. Erick Lopez, Rev. Paul Schneider, and Rev. Shavon Walker.</i>	

Pray for Churches seeking Pastoral Leadership

Filipino-American Christian
Fellowship, Lynnwood, WA

Grace Baptist Church,
San Jose, CA

First Baptist Church of
Denver, Denver, CO

Mt. Zion Baptist Church,
Seattle, WA

Shell Ridge Community
Church, Walnut Creek, WA

Rethinking Evangelism



By Rev. Sam Kim

Research shows that within Protestant Christianity, Evangelicals have grown from a little over 30% their membership in 1970 to just under 60% in 2020, whereas the Mainline Protestants

were just over 50% in 1970 to now under 30% in 2020. Although organized religion as a whole is declining in the United States, Evangelicalism seems to have a higher cultural presence and visibility when compared to any of the Mainline traditions. Its prominence could be equated with the fundamental emphasis on “born-again experiences” that does not seem to have the same prominence in mainline Protestantism. To Mainline Christianity’s loss, evangelism can be dismissed as boorish and embarrassingly zealous. Regardless of how one assesses evangelism theologically, one cannot deny that this missional approach for changing individuals and building a community of changed people is vital to a thriving community – and deeply rooted in scripture!

Romans 12:2 exhorts the church to “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This exhortation, in light of God’s reconciling act, is seen as the main impetus for God’s people to behave in the world: they are encouraged to live in such a way that evidences a complete reconstruction of themselves. Evangelism has often been associated with the modern Evangelical movement in America, which is assumed to be conservative, nationalistic, and rigid. Many see this form of evangelism as propaganda; however, a recovery of the original understanding of *evangelism* as the *proclamation of good news* is desperately needed in today’s world.

Could American Baptists, indeed even all Mainline Protestants, begin to construct a new understanding of evangelism from its theological and scriptural core as an invitation to renewal, transformation, and a new creation of identity in relation to the divine? This sort of framework invites the individual and the greater faith community to an openness to new paradigms, approaches, and worldviews: this is evangelism at its best.

In a world of many violently conflicting opinions, Christianity has a unique opportunity to welcome people into a greater narrative that is reconciling, redemptive, and restorative to the whole New Creation. In staying true to ourselves and this invitation, we can add to our numbers like in Acts, because we are part of a new movement to a new humanity, and not a material expansion in the capitalistic sense. Rather than seeking to recruit out of scarcity and survival, we offer something much more compelling in that one’s entire worldview can be changed. Let’s think again about the vital work of *proclaiming the good news* for the sake of Christ and the church.

Blessings,

Sam.

Evergreen Quarterly Meeting, Aug 9, 10am

Please join us on Saturday, August 9th from 10am to Noon at Panther Lake Community Church, or online by Zoom for Evergreen’s Quarterly Meeting. These meetings are where we do the business of the region and share important information for all our Evergreen churches.

Your attendance is very important! We gain so much from the wisdom of many different perspectives, and we cannot be all that God is calling us to be as Evergreen unless you bring what God has gifted you with to the collective. Email paul@ea-abc.org if you need a copy of the Agenda.

The Zoom link is: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3828576559?omn=87369864371>

Online Learning after 60: Free Courses and Communities for Lifelong Learners (Part I)



By Rev. Shavon Walker

When we think of learning, we most often think of sitting in a classroom or looking things up in a library. Times have changed, however; most people will hop on Youtube

and watch a video or Google directions on how to do something these days. Older generations often have a lot more time thanks to retirement, but still like to keep their minds sharp. And online learning allows flexibility and self paced education from the comfort of home. Today, we'll talk about why online learning works so well, what basics are needed, and best platforms for free and low cost classes.

The reasons that online learning is ideal for older users are fairly straightforward. There are no commute or parking hassles, and you can learn at your own pace without feeling rushed. If a concept is too difficult to understand the first time around, you can revisit it as many times as you need to (especially when working with an app), ask your question in a discussion forum, or just ask your instructor, who may be one of the best in the field. Most important of all for those on a fixed income, online learning is often more cost effective compared to traditional education.

So what do you need to take online classes? You'll need a dependable internet connection, an up to date computer, and an email address. You'll also need a dedicated learning space, and a good handle on time management. Once you have those things, you'll need to create an account and learn the terminology for the parts of the course (such as module, forum, certificate, and so on). Lastly, you'll need a platform for learning. Here are a couple you can start for free.

Coursera partners with Yale, Stanford and other universities. It offers free courses as well as paid certificates in subjects like social media and communication, and digital photography and organization. There are also health and wellness, creative pursuits, and financial literacy classes available.

edX partners with MIT and Harvard to offer professional development courses. You can audit or verify the track you choose, and work with professionals to determine how to get the most out of that track.

YouTube education channels are a go to for a lot of online learners who don't want the formality of a course. Over time, the algorithm will curate recommendations for the content you want to see. Finding reliable sources can be difficult, but look for content creators who are also good teachers. For instance, if you love cooking, you should look for creators who break steps down and whose videos are clear and easy to follow. Experience level may or may not be a factor; as a lover of cooking, I will watch professional chefs with decades of experience and home cooks who are learning how to cook for the first time. If their content is well structured, you can learn something from all of them.

For those who don't want to take online classes and aren't comfortable with just YouTube videos, there are library sponsored platforms. **Lynda.com**, now known as **LinkedIn Learning**, connects with your library card to allow access to digital resources. You can also visit your local library to connect to their local digital resources. **Kanopy** is one of many educational services that you can also use through your library. It's an on-demand streaming video platform for public and academic libraries that offers films, TV shows, educational videos and documentaries. The service is free for end users, but libraries pay fees on a pay-per-view model, from which content owners and content creators are paid.

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That's it for this week. Next week, I'll list more sources for online education, and we'll look into other topics like overcoming common challenges and finding supportive communities online. If you'd like me to write about a certain topic, email me at shavon@ea-abc.org.

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answers God gives to that question.

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good;

And what does the LORD require of you

But to do justice..."

"[I]f you didn't want to be separated from your children you shouldn't have come here illegally."

Is there justice in separating families for what in our legal code is a civil offense on par with jay walking? Is there justice in kidnapping people and sending them to jails in countries they are not citizens in?

"There is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice." - Montesquieu

Justice isn't retribution or revenge or cruelty.

So, what is justice?

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." - Romans 12:2

To do justice then isn't to forget laws or to

allow anyone to do anything they want. To do justice is the arduous work of loving and teaching us into fully realizing that repairing damage or hurt cannot be done by hurting or damaging. To see everyone as children of God. So that when consequences need to be paid they are fair and aiming to repair. To do justice truly is to ask, "What would Jesus do to this person?"

Urban Impact's Thriving Congregations & Communities Cohort

Urban Impact envisions communities where all people are reconciled to God and thriving together. We believe the Church plays a key role in this, so we invest in connecting and equipping people to be the Church in their neighborhoods.

Working with 4-5 churches in the Seattle area at a time, the Thriving Congregations and Communities Cohort trains participants to become adaptive and responsive to the changing contexts of their neighborhoods and congregational makeup. We believe in learning with and from each other and are intentional about building a safe and supportive environment. From September 2025 to June 2026, we meet twice a month, for half a day.

Our goal is to grow in: loving God and our neighbors, listening to the Holy Spirit's leading, and co-creating pathways to thriving with those we love and serve.

Participants will learn a number of skills in this process.

Urban Impact will award \$6,000 to participating congregations upon completion of the cohort to implement what they have learned.

To apply, please scan or click this QR Code and fill out the application.

If you have any questions, please contact Eunice Lin-Sawyer, elinsawyer@urbanimpactseattle.org or Lynne Blessing, lblessing@urbanimpactseattle.org.



Helping People from Burma Be Safe & Feel Safe

It is painfully clear in this day and age that many groups of people, for a variety of reasons, do not currently feel safe in their environment. This includes many of our friends from Burma who came to the US as refugees or immigrants—even those who are legal permanent residents (“green card holders”) or already US citizens. It certainly is true of others from Burma who have applied for asylum or have come to the US with educational or other non-immigrant visas.

On June 18th, 158 national, state, and local organizations submitted a letter to President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem urging the Administration to “extend and redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Burma.” According to the website of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, TPS for Burma is due to expire on November 25th of this year. The Burma Advocacy Group that grew out of the American Baptist Burma Refugee Commission was one of the religious freedom, human rights, and civil society organizations that joined in this request.

The full text of the letter, including numerous footnotes, can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kCVGojJqVvc7J4Fnv0sXXDVitLcw7dZy/edit>. After summarizing the terms of Temporary Protected Status, the letter goes on to describe the conditions in Burma that make safe returns impossible. These include environmental disaster (the March earthquake), ongoing armed conflict, and ethnic and religious persecution. The letter continues by stating that TPS for Burma aligns with US foreign policy and strategic interest. A full list of the 158 organizations appears at the end of the letter.

Please continue to pray for the people Burma, including those who have come to live or study in the US. Please also consider ways that you may advocate on their behalf, including calling, emailing, or visiting your representatives in Congress.

Evergreen at the ABC-USA Biennial Mission Summit

Evergreen was well represented at the ABC-USA Biennial Mission Summit in Omaha, Nebraska in July. We had over 30 Evergreen folks in attendance, and a booth in the Exhibit Hall. New Beginnings Christian Fellowship received an award for being the Black church that gives the most to United Missions in the entire ABC-USA!

Our thanks to those who spent time as volunteers at the booth, and to all who attended. You represented Evergreen well! Below is a picture of all the Evergreen people we could get at the booth. Some had to come by later and be added in digitally. See if you can figure out how many and who they are!



Taste of Evergreen Report

We had a great Taste of Evergreen event. We sold over 80 meals, and our dessert auction raised nearly \$1,300. All in all, we raised over \$2,700 for the Translators Fund!

Evergreen would like to thank Panther Lake Community Church for hosting, the Intercultural Team for planning the event, Rev. Doug Avilesbernal and Rev. Shavon Walker for leading the program, Rev. Sam Kim for the Intercultural playlist of music, Rev. Ken Curl and Pastor Angeline Lau for being our Auctioneers, and all of the volunteers!



Introducing New Evergreen Pastors

This month we have two more pastors to introduce to everyone: Rev. Gary Baits, who just started as the Pastor at Panther Lake Community Church, but is a familiar face here in Evergreen, and Pastor Rachel Palmbush of New Community Church, one of the most recently joined Evergreen congregations.



hometown (Go Padres!) where I gave my life to Christ. Next was Berkeley, CA and seminary, where I met Mylinda, my wife (since '87) and partner in ministry. We then served ABC church-

es in Salem, OR (ordained together in '89) and Port Angeles, WA (Go Mariners!). In 2000, we were commissioned to serve as global servants with International Ministries in Costa Rica. We moved to Olympia in 2012, where we have been active members of Olympia FBC. Mylinda continues with I.M. as a *global consultant for training through restorative arts*.

Meanwhile, I was called to teach Spanish at Pope John Paul II High School in Lacey, WA. My love of Spanish, gifts with young people, and pastoral heart, made for a meaningful twelve years.

Now I am circling back to pastoral ministry, and am honored to serve as pastor of Panther Lake Community Church in Kent, WA.

I am an encourager, teacher, and preacher. I enjoy seeing God's people use their gifts as we proclaim and reflect God's *kingdom*: to love mercy, to do justice, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). I believe that the church, even with all its failings and flaws, can offer community and grace to a world plagued by selfishness and discrimination.

Though I have served in a variety of settings and cultures, the constant has been that in all these places, God continues to welcome me home. See how I cleverly circled back to the parable?

I should add that I enjoy jokes and puns in both English and Spanish. Moreover, my dream World Series of Mariners-Padres is proof of my childlike faith.

Most importantly, Mylinda and I are expecting grandchildren this fall, as both our daughter and our daughter in law are pregnant. So far, they have rejected all my fabulous name suggestions.



My name is **Rachel Palmbush** and I have had the joy of serving as a pastor at New Community Church in Menlo Park for the past five years. As a pastor's kid and lifelong churchgoer, I grew up surrounded by Scripture, faith-

based community, and a multigenerational legacy of ministry. Though women weren't permitted to pursue pastoral roles in the denomination of my childhood, I followed my passion for spiritual formation by studying psychology and theology at Calvin College and Fuller Seminary. I worked in faith-based education before taking time off to raise my four children. I was born in Michigan and raised in upstate New York, but after living in California for 30 years I claim honorary native status. For the past 18 years I have lived in Mountain View, CA with my husband, Scott, who also works in ministry.

I am a breast cancer survivor, a lover of fiction, a creator of scripture art, and a beholder of God's creation. At the heart of my calling is the simple desire to help people grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus and the belief that God's Word is true, beautiful, and compelling.

"Welcome home!" It is what the heartbroken father says to his returning son in Jesus' parable from Luke's gospel. God offers this welcome to all of us, inviting us to the family feast.

My (**Gary Baits**) journey began in San Diego, my

“Strangers No More!”

(Leviticus 19:34)

2025 Evergreen Annual Meeting October 9-11, 2025 Olympia First Baptist Church

Basic Schedule

Thursday Evening: Clergy (Ministers' Council) & Laity Gatherings

Friday: Welcome Plenary, In Person Workshops, Friday Night Worship

Saturday: Business Meeting, Online Workshops, Olympia Experiences, Saturday Night Worship, Event Ends

Sunday: Join in worship at a western Washington Evergreen Church

Featured Preachers



Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches-USA



Rev. Dr. Angela Barker-Jackson, VP of Institutional Advancement of the Berkeley School of Theology

Registration Fees

Online: \$50

In Person: \$100 (+\$10 for Thursday Gatherings) *Limited Scholarships are available*

Hotels

We've engaged two hotels. The first option is the [Towneplace Suites](#) (900 Capitol Way S, Olympia) is right across from the church, but their rooms are either only a single King or a Queen and a pullout sofa. The rate is \$129 per night before taxes and fees.

The other option is the [Hilton Garden Inn](#) (2101 Henderson Park Lane SE, Olympia) which has both Single King and Double Queen rooms available. The rate is \$151 per night (before taxes and fees).

You can call either hotel and place a reservation letting them know you are with the Evergreen Association, or you can click the name of either hotel above to go to a link for a reservation.

Register Now!

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



Evergreen Clergy Backpacking Trip

Do you love to get out into nature for hiking and camping?

In the wild places some people find God's presence to be very close!

Want to participate in a great wilderness experience led by a professional guide and pastor?

Check out this trip for Pastors and other Clergy!



Clergy Backpacking Trip

August 20-23, 2025

In the Olympic National Park

Clergy have such an important job, helping others to connect with God, and you also need time to renew your spirits.

Join us for a four day, three night trip to the Olympic National Park. *This trip is for clergy only, and will be meaningful!*

Cost is \$800, which includes all food, permits, etc. Equipment to be provided by the individual or can be rented for a discount from the guide. Partial scholarships may be available for this trip. Continuing Ed monies can be tapped as well!

To sign up, go to this link and fill out the form:

<https://www.wildernessjourneys.org/evergreen>

You can also get more information and inquire about scholarships at that link! If you would like to discuss Continuing Education money and it's role in this trip, please see Rev. Doug!

Led by Rev. Dr. Jonathan Malone of Wilderness Journeys



Jonathan Malone is a minister, hiker, musician, husband, father, and slightly crazy. For a number of years he has been leading groups of youth and adults into the wilderness.

He is a trip leader, retreat leader, writer, teacher, speaker, and dreamer.

He previously led a Clergy Backpacking Trip for Evergreen in 2023.



SAVE THE DATES



Retirement
CELEBRATIONS

HONORING

Pastor Jim Hopkins

RETIREMENT BANQUET

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 12, 2025

**SCOTT'S SEAFOOD
GRILL AND BAR**

JACK LONDON SQUARE

CHECK IN 5 - 6 PM
DINNER AT 6 PM SHARP

ALL ARE WELCOME

\$150 PER PERSON, RSVP AT

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/PASTORJIM](https://tinyurl.com/pastorjim)

[RETIREMENTBANQUET](#)

BY AUGUST 25TH

**SPECIAL CHURCH
SERVICE & COFFEE
HOUR CELEBRATION**

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 14,
2025

10.00AM - 2.00PM

**LAKESHORE
AVENUE BAPTIST
CHURCH**

3534 LAKESHORE AVE
OAKLAND, CA 94610

ALL ARE WELCOME



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#ebaabc

Return Service Requested

Evergreen Notes, the newsletter for member churches, ecumenical partners, national affiliates, and friends of the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches is published monthly. Please submit articles by the 20th of the month prior to expected publication. You are encouraged to copy and/or reprint information and articles for your congregation and community.

Building Bridges, Resourcing Churches & Translating Our Unity

Mission Statement

Being a culturally diverse people who are one in Christ and who value the liberties of our American Baptist Heritage, the Evergreen Baptist Association will **Build bridges** between communities; **Provide resources** to equip member churches to share Christ and teach God’s word; and **Translate our unity** to the world.

May you return from summer vacations safely, into what God has next for you!

Save these Dates!

We’ve got some great events coming up within our region. Please mark your calendars so you can make sure to participate in these fantastic coming events!

Backpacking Trip, Aug 20-23

See inside for details!

Evergreen Quarterly Meeting, Aug. 9, 10am

At Panther Lake Community Church. See inside for details!

Evergreen Annual Gathering, Oct 9-11 at Olympia FBC!

Please join us for a great time together. See inside for more details!

Evergreen Clergy

August Calendar

August 2—Faith & Family Day at the Seattle Mariners—1:10pm Game Time—Against the Texas Rangers

August 2—The New Beginnings Christian Fellowship 20th Anniversary Gala

August 9—Evergreen Quarterly Meeting—10am to Noon—At Panther Lake Community Church and online via Zoom.

August 9—National Garage Sale Day

August 12—International Youth Day

August 16—Janmashtami— Celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna for Hindus.

August 20-23—Evergreen Clergy Backpacking Trip along the Hoh River—See inside for details.

August 24—National Waffle Day

August 27—Ganesh Chaturthi— Celebrating the birth of the elephant god Ganesha for Hindus.