

The **New Olympian** *November 2026*

The Newsletter of the Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren
tel. 206.525.8900 • olympicchurch.org • email: ovsecretary@gmail.com

Message from the Pastor

by Pastor Norm Underland

John Stephen Akhwari, is perhaps one the most famous Olympic athletes but not for the reason you might think. Akhwari was chosen to represent his country of Tanzania in the 1968 Summer Olympic games in the marathon. No, he did not set a world record, he didn't even win. In fact, he finished dead last, more than an hour after the winner had crossed the finish line.

The medals had already been awarded, nearly all of the fans had gone home. But word had started to spread that this lone runner from Tanzania was still on the race course and determined to finish. When local fans heard about Akhwari many came back to cheer him on. To offer their encouragement in the form of clapping and yelling from the stands as he sought to complete the race he began over 3 hours before.

It would be a mistake to say that Akhwari was simply not up to the task of competing at that level. This was not one of those cases where the superior athletes finished first and those who were just happy to be there did what they could and worked hard so they could say they did it. That year the games were in Mexico city. The higher elevation, and thinner air caused problems for many of the runners. Of the 75 who started, 18 dropped out. Cramping and a fall resulted in Akhwari dislocating his knee, hurting his shoulder and injuring his head in the process. He could have quit, but instead had his knee bandaged up and kept on running, walking large stretches at a time. When asked why, he said "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

Finishing is what mattered. Jesus didn't die so we could quit on this life of faith either. He didn't give the Spirit so we could give up when times get hard. We are meant to finish, we are meant to persevere. We are meant to encourage one another in this life so that we will in fact cross the finish line when the race is complete. Encouragement serves as a reminder that we are all in this together. In Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica he writes:

"So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it." *(1 Thes 5 The Message Translation)*

As we all run this race let us keep encouraging one another as well. You never know when a word of encouragement could be just what another sister or brother needs to keep running their race.

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P·E·A·C·E

PLACE STAMP HERE

The New Olympian
Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren
P.O. Box 75032
Seattle WA 98175

It's Time to Start Collecting Donations for Thanksgiving Baskets

By Harriet Koscho

November is here, and we are planning to give away complete Thanksgiving dinners to 75+ Families.

We provide "all the fixings" for families at Olympic View Elementary, the Broadview Shelter, a couple of families connected to the church, and some Northaven staff families as well.

Donations of food are very welcome! We do a lot of shopping too - I'll be sending emails about current sales as the weeks go by leading up to Turkey day. We especially like donated turkeys; we usually need around 10, and we already have two!



We have several very helpful things you can do to participate without spending any money at all. We shop for bulk vegetables at restaurant supply stores using donation money and volunteers are needed to lift 50-pound bags of onions and bring them to the church. Freezer space is needed to store turkeys, chickens, pies, and whipped topping. We also need around 50 large cardboard boxes (because we don't literally have "baskets".)
We will set up tables and fill boxes Sunday evening, November 22. We've switched to a delivery system where we ask the families to choose a time slot on Monday, November 25 for us to deliver baskets. It's really fun, and you can go on your own, or take a friend with you! The delivery drivers get a list of about 5 families with cell phone numbers and addresses. We'll give you a standard text to explain who you are and that you'll be coming "between 12 and 3" or whatever time slot you picked. On Tuesday and Wednesday we take any food that is undeliverable or extra out to people on the waiting list. We can use volunteers from outside the church too! You may have heard of "Christmas and Easter Christians" but we have several "Thanksgiving Basket Friends" who joyfully participate.

The school PTA helps some, but to provide Thanksgiving dinner for 300+ people, we need to raise donations of around $1000 from the church. Designate your gift by writing "Thanksgiving baskets" on your church donation envelope, or by selecting "Thanksgiving Baskets" in this link:
https://olympicview.churchtrac.com/give

A New Way to Give to Olympic View

By Gretchen Zience

Try out Olympic View's new online giving platform, Zeffy a safe and easy way to give.

Another Church of the Brethren congregation recently gave us a recommendation for this new way to give to the church. We've set up Zeffy to enable anyone who would like to donate to Olympic View using this site.

One significant advantage to Zeffy is that they do not charge a fee to use their services. PayPal, for example, charges 3.38% for each donation. So if you give $100 to the church, the church gets $96.62 and PayPal gets a fee of $3.38.

Follow the link below and make a small gift as a trial run. Zeffy allows you to opt out of transaction fees, but you need to tab down on the fee, click "other," and type in "$0." Avoid credit card fees by making a bank withdrawal.

Here is the link to Zeffy:

https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/offerings-30

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

Meets in person or via Zoom on Thursday's at 7pm.

Meeting ID: 880 4042 6488
Passcode: 390082

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

Meets via Zoom every 1st & 3rd Saturday 3-4pm

Meeting ID: 852 3609 1295
Passcode: 601582

Look for the email invitations in your mailbox.

District Conference Recap

by Gretchen Zience

Thirty-six people attended District Conference, both in-person and online, held at Camp Koinonia the weekend of September 25-26. Business included the presentation of several reports, as described below.

District Treasurer's Report and 2027 Budget: Daniel Klayton, District Treasurer, reviewed the 2027 Budget Proposal and the Financial Report. The District realized proceeds from the sale of the Columbia Lakewood Community Church building of about $495,000 and disbursed gifts of $18,000 from the District to all District congregations. Budgeted 2027 revenue is $43,100, and expenses are $110,550, for a net deficit of $67,450 for 2027. Not reflected in the 2027 budget are two donations received after August 31: $20,000 from Peace Church and the final $50,000 from the sale of the Salkum building.

District Executive Team: Lani Wright reported that the District Executive Team completed the five-year ordination review of all clergy in the District. She also reported on the success of disorganizing the Columbia Lakewood Community Church and the sale of its building. The team also ordained Daniel Klayton. The Executive Team was also active in the Deportation Defense Fund, as well as reaching out to pastors in and beyond the District.

The Evergreen Way: Structure: Special Guest Rev. Doug Avilesbernal, from the American Baptists, gave an interesting presentation about the history and creation in 2003 of the Evergreen Association of American Baptists, a non-geographic region in the denomination, born out of the disagreement over the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons. He spoke about the four ethnic caucuses in the Association (European, Black, Latino, and Asian) and the way each caucus organizes and represents themselves on their Executive Committee. The emphasis is on diversity, not numbers. Each caucus has equal power regardless of size, and each caucus can veto any choice for any reason. Decision making is a constant search for wisdom in unexpected places.

Annual Conference and Denominational Report: Moderator Dennis Beckner joined us by Zoom after lunch to preview Annual Conference 2027 in Daytona Beach. Nancy McCrickard brought greetings from the Mission Advancement Team and the Mission and Ministry Board. Attendees were encouraged to participate and serve in various COB programs, including FaithX, National Youth Conference, Intercultural Ministries, Brethren Disaster Ministries, Children's Disaster Services, Brethren Volunteer Service, and National Older Adult Conference. Mission and Ministry Board: Gretchen Zience has just been selected for the Mission and Ministry Board and has not yet attended a meeting of the Board, so she did not have a report.

Standing Committee: Patrick Fiegenbaum reported on the new business that was passed on to the delegate body at Annual Conference (Resolution on Weapons Transfer, Adjustments to 2014 Ministerial Leadership; Resolution: Walking Together: Immigration, Peacemaking, Conscience, and Supporting Our Neighbors; and Recommended Cost of Living Adjustment to the Minimum Cash Salary Table for Pastors). There was considerable discussion in Standing Committee about how best to support the Haitian Brethren congregations in Florida and elsewhere, whose members have lost their Temporary Protected Status and face the possibility of being forcibly returned to Haiti.

Eder Financial/Everence: Lynnae Rodeffer discussed the transfer of the denomination's funds from Eder Financial to Everence. Everence has hired some persons (including Lynnae) from Eder. Eder will continue providing some services, such as a church worker assistance program. Jonathan Harnish gave a presentation about Everence Financial to explain its mission, history, and its new relationship with the Church of the Brethren. Mennonite Insurance Services (MIS): Marcus Mahling reported that MIS is opening a new office in the area, and he talked about the services and products MIS offers not only for congregations but also for individuals.

Brethren Disaster Ministries: Frosty Wilkinson reported on the recent activities of Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Annual Conference Webcasting: Enten Eller reported on webcasting Annual Conference. He thanked the District and the Living Stream congregation for their two-year financial commitment to making virtual attendance at Annual Conference possible and affordable. In consultation with the Living Stream congregation and the District Board, the webcasting team will continue to work with the denominational offices to make virtual attendance available at the 2027 Conference.

Other Denominational Reports: Kent Verbeck, from the Camp Koinonia board, reported that the camp renewed its lease for the land through 2050. Scott Webb, director of the camp, reported on maintenance, repair, and new projects on the camp grounds, as well as the number of campers and the special weeks they have offered for adults in recovery, special needs children, families touched by cancer, and others.

Calls to Action District Response to Annual Conference Resolutions

At the 2026 Annual Conference, there were two calls to action directed at COB congregations. Pacific Northwest District is responding to these calls, as described below.

Walking Together: Immigration, Peacemaking, Conscience, and Supporting Our Neighbors: The District initially donated $18,000 to the Deportation Defense Legal Mutual Aid Fund. The Ellisforde congregation has been awarded a grant from that Fund to pay a lawyer to represent a man who was in danger of being deported. The Pacific Northwest District has responded to this call from the denomination, and we continue to support our neighbors not only through financial assistance but by our presence in communities in peril.

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General Assembly November 15

Church Leadership is hard at work planning for 2027. Please set aside November 15 after church for our Regular General Assembly meeting. There will be food available between the worship service and meeting.

This year-end regular General Assembly meeting is where you hear reports on what has happened in the life of the church in the last six months, while also looking ahead to the next year. The agenda will include:

- New Budget for 2027 – this must be approved by the congregation
- Elections - Church Officers, Jubilee Trustees and the Annual Conference Delegate for 2027 are affirmed by the congregation
- A Special Jubilee Fund proposal from the current Trustees will be presented
- Reports about the church building, coming events, and from the pastor.
- Reports from Organizations we support (Northaven, Camp Koinonia, PNW District Disaster Response to name a few)

When we approved our constitution and bylaws, we set the quorum for General assembly meetings at 50% of our average weekly participation. We did this because we wanted the decisions of the church to be made by the majority of participants, not just by a select few people in leadership. That is exciting, but also means that we all need to be present when we meet together as the congregation. If you cannot come in person, there will be a link to join by Zoom.

Roger Edmark, Moderator

Getting to Know the Staff! Tajaé Lewis

by Roger Edmark

This is an interview with Tajaé ("TT") Lewis, who works for the church each Sunday morning by monitoring the Live Stream of the worship service that can be seen on YouTube or Facebook.

What Year did you first Connect in some way with OVCC?

Actually, I started to go to church at University Christian when I was 12 years old. The first person I met there was Harriet Koscho. I started working in the daycare at their old church building by the UW campus. I was also attending the bible study for teens." I hadn't been attending from high school until just almost going on 2 years ago, when I started going to Olympic View and began to take care of the live stream during the Sunday morning service.

Can you tell us a little more about yourself?

Though my name is Tajaé, I love to go by TT. I was born and raised in Seattle; my favorite part of Seattle is the scenery. My father's side is from Louisiana, which I love as well - beautiful people. I have a lot of hobbies. I like to do hair, cook, draw and some outdoor activities. I have three sisters – (I'm the oldest!) and 1 niece.

Finally, Is there anything else that you want to share about your relationship with the church?

I love my God, my family, helping and feeding people – I might need to bring a dish one Sunday. Welp that's me! :)

Conference continued from page 3

Resolution on Weapons Transfer: This resolution from Annual Conference asked congregations and district boards to be intentional about providing resources and encouragement for church members to learn about, reflect on, and take action on the concern of U.S. arms transfers. Annual Conference also asked congregations and districts to divest from investments in companies that have more than a minimum involvement in weapons production and that derive a majority of their profit through military contracts. The District staff will assemble a draft collection of resources about weapons transfers between nations to be posted on the District website, similar to the collection about LBGTQIA+ resources

Discernment of Spiritual Gifts Group

by John Braun

A group is forming, led by John Braun, to learn about and discern one another's spiritual gifts. These are God-given and Holy Spirit motivated, for contributing to the life and ministry of the church. Time and place will be decided by the group.

Romans 12:6 says: "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."

1 Corinthians 12:1 says: "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

Gifts are identified in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-30, Romans 12:4-8 and Ephesians 4:11-13. The combination of gifts in each of us is unique and reveals the window of trust and faith that God has enabled in our lives.

Please express your interest to John personally, by phone/text (206-507-2561) or by email (jabraun.counterpoint@gmail.com). Let's get on board by Sunday, Nov. 8!

October Happenings

by Roger Edmark

October was a busy month at Olympic View Community Church. We have included photos of the events to go with the descriptions. These were all great events, but none of them happen without people coming forward to organize them, so a special thanks goes out to those that made them happen.

October 4 – CROP Walk

Several from the church walked around Green Lake to support the work of Church World Service to eliminate poverty. CROP originally stood for "Christian Rural Overseas Program", but today is better known to mean "Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty". It was great fun and everyone managed to make it all the way around the lake! A special thanks to Harriet for promoting the event and for Denise, Gowri, Kristi, Roger, Serene, Jeanne, Harriet and friend Gabriel, for making the trek.



October 11 – Norm Underland Installation Service

Howard Ullery, representing the Pacific Northwest District of the Church of the Brethren, Jana Helmuth, representing church leadership, and you, the congregation, officially installed Norm as our pastor. An installation service publicly places a new pastor into a specific congregation and formally establishes a mutual covenant of responsibilities between the pastor and the church. Welcome Norm!



October 11 – All Church Potluck Picnic at Helmuth's House

A great group gathered at Mike and Jana Helmuth's house to enjoy spending time together. Norm and his family came as the honored guests as we celebrated his official installation as our pastor. Bill Hershberger took charge of the grill cooking burgers, and a lot of delicious food was enjoyed by all. The weather even cooperated such that we were able to enjoy the homes wooded outdoor setting for the picnic.



October 18 – Baby Shower for Janay and baby daughter Cenay

About 20 people were part of the Baby Shower held after church. There was good food, fun activities, nice presents, and plenty of time to spend together in support of Janay as she raises her little daughter Cenay. A special thanks to Kathy, with support from Harriet, Gretchen, Jana and Sylvia, for organizing it.



Calendar for November

Thurs. Nov. 5

No Bible Study this week

Sat. Nov. 7

Zoom Coffee Hour 3pm

Tues. Nov 10

Leadership Meeting at 7pm on Zoom

Thurs. Nov. 12

Bible Study 7pm

Sun. Nov. 15

Communion - 11am
General Assembly 12:30pm

Thurs. Nov. 19

Bible Study 7pm

Sat. Nov. 21

Zoom Coffee Hour 3pm

Tues. Nov. 24

Book Group 3:30pm

Ordinary Grace - William Kent Krueger

Thurs. Nov. 26

No Bible Study this week



Bill - master of the BBQ

Crossword Puzzle Wisdom

by Roger Edmark

I was given a one-year crossword puzzle calendar. Each weekday and once on the weekend, I complete the small puzzle of the day. I thoroughly enjoy this small challenge and try very hard not to use the cell phone when it gets tough to find the right word. I do occasionally "ask a friend" by seeing if Kathy or Nod has any idea about a word that is stumping me. On April 27th I had this clue to solve: "Test of responsibility before a pet or kid." As I pondered the right word, it eventually worked out that the word being sought was "plant".

I guess the gist of this is that it is better to start with a plant when figuring out how to be caring. Then graduate to pets and children once you develop proper responsibility. I guess the counter argument is that, if you are not responsible enough to keep a plant alive, you should probably not have a pet or kid. What is the implication of that? Are plants and animals and people all the same in value? Is this actually a good test? I know people that cannot keep a plant alive and are good parents and also take care of their pets as valued members of the family. It made me wonder if this was actually good "crossword wisdom", or just some kind of crazy generalization.

But interestingly, as I thought more about it, a sort of truth emerged which I think has merit. Some people see all of Gods creation as equal – all valuable and all deserving of the very best while they live on this earth. They have equal compassion on the plants of this world (nature), on the creatures that roam the earth (animals) and on the dominant intellectual creatures (people). They are all valuable! To quote the Bible (NIV) in Genesis 1 – "And God saw that it was good" (verses 10 (land sea), 12 (plants & trees), 18 (sun & moon & stars), 21 (fishes & birds & land animals), 25(wild and domestic animals and creatures) and in verse 31, the author is even more emphatic after God makes people when he says "God saw <u>all</u> that he had made, and it was <u>very</u> good". It is all good – very good! So how does this apply to how I might take care of a plant?

When Kathy and I were in Japan, we saw how gardeners would go to great lengths to prop up an aging tree or one of its limbs as it lived out its last years. It was treated with compassion way beyond what you would usually provide for a tree. It was valued not only as it is today, but also by the legacy of what it went through in the past. Trees that survived the atomic bomb exploding over Hiroshima are pampered and honored as survivors of what happened.

Perhaps the effort we take to care for a plant says something about how we see the world. And maybe it also says something about how we care for the world – the plants, the animals and the people. Perhaps we all need to go get a plant and start practicing compassion "on the least of these" parts of creation. Maybe then we will be able to care for <u>all the rest of it</u> a lot better!

BOOK GROUP

Booklist 2026-2027

Ordinary Grace by William Kent Kreuger

Our book for November and December is Ordinary Grace by William Kent Krueger. We read another one of his books last year, "This Tender Land", and we really liked it! The year is 1961, and 13-year old Frank Drum recounts the tragic events in his family that happened that fateful summer. The first session will cover the first half of the book, chapters 1-17 up to page 151. Ask Harriet for a copy, they are $8 each.

Jan./Feb. - **The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom**

Mar./Apr. - **Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi**

https://olympicchurch.org/2026/03/25/book-group-2026/

Meets every 4th Tuesday 3:30 - 5 pm
Meeting ID: 857 2403 5342
Passcode: 309318