



Lifetime Service

Rev. Allen A. Belton

1939-2022

Saints, it is with a hug, a prayer and a song, that we present this next award.

To know him, is to know he had a genuine heart for the Lord and this our beloved community.

Reverend Allen A. Belton genuinely loved people and knew no strangers. His passion for people and belief in justice and equality drove him with purpose for life. Many who knew him, longed to hear the greeting “Guess what? I love you! And there’s nothing you can do about it!” He had a gift of presence and encouragement.

One friend wrote, “Pastor Allen had an incredible gift of encouragement. He epitomized the “ministry of presence,” ... He and his precious life partner, Margaret, taught often about forgiveness and the freedom that comes from releasing bitterness.”

Allen Belton, born in New York on March 10, 1939, was passionate about three things: his family, ministry and people; and he spent his childhood in the presence of people who loved and served God. And in his own life he mirrored that very thing. His own ministry began at 18. He ministered at Lighthouse Full Gospel Church in Redwood City as associate pastor; then as pastor in Seaside, CA for nearly 20 years; and on the pastoral staff at San Francisco Christian Center. He was Youth for Christ director in San Jose and led their national movement in recruiting urban and minority staff. Spent time in Namibia and Kenya with Youth for Christ and traveled to the Balkans with Renewing Our Mind. He served in Seattle with University Presbyterian Church, over urban and global missions and co-founder of the UPC Gospel Choir; and also with Urban Impact as he began Ministries of Reconciliation.

Breathing encouragement, life, and partnership into many areas of our communities from leaders, churches and congregations, and community organizations such as DADS, Breakthrough Partners, Telios, and Choose180. Being friends in ministry with Dr. John Perkins, Allen served on the founding board for the John Perkins Center as the partnership opened at Seattle Pacific University in 2004; as well as the founding board of King County Youth Chaplaincy.

For Allen, we know his heart for people and his heart for singing were integrated into how he lived life, engaged justice and greeted people. It would not be unconventional to hear Allen break into song. This carried him into his final moments, as he mustered up the energy to sing with those who came to care for him. Allen often said, “You have to go through what is, to get to what will be.”

A mentee described, “This man was a remarkable example of remaining true to who you are. Showing me along with so many how to embrace the beauty of our Black bodies and selves in spaces that so often would want to strip those realities away from us and the world.”

Allen loved his family dearly, his wife Margaret and their four children, Elizabeth, Noel, Christopher, and Heather. In his declining health, he was holding onto this love ever more. He is survived by Margaret, his wife of 56 years, his children, 14 grandchildren, three great grandchildren, 2 siblings, and many nieces, nephews, cousins and so many friends - many in this room. He is loved. He is missed.

Pastor Belton, along with Donnie Griffin, are the reason we are gathered here this morning, as co-founders and orchestrator for this very Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Prayer Breakfast. Coming together in remembrance of Dr. King, as a man of prayer and follower of Christ, and advocate and convener for justice.



Community Award Violet Lavatai

With an inspirational story, this Mountaintop Awardee has been characterized as heartfelt, passionate, giving, caring, compassionate and selfless. The words “She is the voice of her community” is one depiction that was written about her. This year’s Community Awardee is Violet Lavatai.

Having over 30 years in the Rainier Valley, Violet was raised in south Seattle, though born in San Francisco. She is an advocate for the marginalized given her own experience with housing instability and challenges as a woman of color. Working as a computer technician for a gas station chain, the Great Recession costed her job. It was then that she and her son moved to renting a room in her sister’s home. Coming into a new season, she began engaging community in different ways, like empowering women, protesting low wages and poor working conditions, and even a little public speaking.

She has spent 12 plus years serving as a community organizer. As a healthy food access team member and board member with Got Green – an environmental, racial, and economic justice organization, based in south Seattle - Violet is described as “passionate about increasing access to healthier foods for her family, her Samoan community, and her neighborhood.” She is currently serving as the executive director for the Tenant’s Union of Washington State. It has been heard that she is quite a singer; and has on occasion brought together her organizing and singing abilities.

As a believer in the Tenants Union, Violet is an advocate for fair housing for all, as a human right; and she knows that people should come before profits. Through her leadership she has supported and advocated for

statewide Just Cause Eviction Prevention, Right to Free Counsel for Low Income Tenants, and the Governor's Moratorium on Evictions during the pandemic.

In the words of Dr. King,

"The ultimate measure of a [person] is not where [they] stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where [they] stand at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk [their] position . . . prestige, and even [their] life for the welfare of others."



Education Award Charlett Shoecraft

If there is someone who has spent their life breaking cycles of poverty and changing the lives of youth, one child at a time, it is this year's Vision from the Mountaintop Education Awardee, Charlett Shoecraft. She founded, Empowering Youth and Families Outreach, with her husband John in 2001. But her involvement in youth development has sustained over 30 years of work, including working as the Youth Program Director for 9 years with Seattle's Union Gospel Mission.

She stands up against the relational, educational, and structural challenges of forgotten youth and works to fortify the skills and talents they need to become upstanding citizens. She provides outdoor exploration, STEM, literacy, and college and career readiness that will set these youth up for a successful future. Charlett has impacted over 5000 youth with a success rate of 98% of youth who attend her programs going on to attend college or other higher learning institutions.

Charlett continues to be a mentor, community leader, coach and parent to thousands of youth in our community. She and John have 7 children in addition to several additional fostering relationships contributing to their family. She values time with family, creating and traveling. These passions influence the development of her programs within Empowering Youth and Families Outreach. Beyond academic enrichment, she engages in co-creating with young leaders in their programs, collaborating with volunteers and community partners to construct leadership and life development skills, along with opportunities that change the lives of young people.

Shoecraft's advocacy for young people and compassion towards community, motivates her involvement with various organizations and programs. She has served on advisory councils with the Teenage Runaway Shelter, Rainier View Elementary, Van Asselt Community Center and Emerson Elementary. As well as on the board of directors for Emerald City Jobs, Southeast Youth and Family Services, and Freely Given.

Miss Charlett is a quiet but mighty leader in our community with an impact on thousands. She has developed Empowering Youth and Families Outreach into a key youth and community resource for Seattle and the greater King County region.



Business Award Molly Moon Neitzel

This year's Vision from the Mountaintop Business awardee has sought to make the world better one scoop at a time, bringing intentional efforts for giving childhood joy to people of all ages. You may recognize the French bulldog/terrier mix from the logo, as Molly Moon Neitzel opened up the first scoop shop in 2008. She is founder and CEO of Molly Moons, with a hope and belief that "shared love of ice cream brings people together for the common goal of pure happiness".

Molly is a mother who grew up in Boise, Idaho. In addition to ice cream she is a lover of music. In college, she served as student body president and stays politically active, supporting causes important to her. Contributing to community is a value that is demonstrated by Molly and Molly Moons, along with her interests in sustainability and advocacy for workers' rights. She, herself, served as a scooper in college at The Big Dipper in Missoula, Montana. And before stepping into the ice cream business, she was the executive director for Music for America, a political non-profit around voter registration.

Molly Moons esteems to be an environmentally and socially responsible business. She works to partner with local farmers and producers whose ingredients is used to create local flavors and aids in keeping the dollar in the local community. An integral value for Molly Moons is how they treat their employees; providing free health care, livable wages, and paid family and sick leave. They have a giving program and engage in social justice work with the community; - from intentional job strategizing, community activism, diversity training, and equity practices, charitable giving, and community volunteering through the Mooncrew.

Molly Moon's has 8 locations around the greater Seattle area and her favorite sundae is always on the menu, a combo of salted caramel, melted chocolate, hot fudge and candied hazelnuts.