

MAY 2014

BETHEL UCC beacon

worship

MAY 4

Resurrection Recognition
Luke 24:13-35
Rev. Kristen Curlee

MAY 11

MOTHER'S DAY
Shepherd Among Us
John 10:1-10
Ms. Kim Moeller

MAY 18

In God's House
John 14:1-14
Rev. Carolyn Richar

MAY 25

Advocate Within
John 14:15-21
Rev. Kristen Curlee

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

**10 a.m. Worship
& Sunday School
11 a.m. Fellowship**



Passing the Peace

BY PASTOR KRISTEN CURLEE

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." —John 20:19

The passing of the peace—most people either love it or they hate it. Some see it as a wonderful welcoming way to greet their friends on Sunday morning; a way to see who is at church and be reminded with whom you want to reconnect during fellowship. For others, it's a dreaded time where you say hello to people you've never met or hardly know, exchanging handshakes that are too tight along with who knows how many germs. Whether you love it or you hate it, passing the peace is bigger than a simple welcome, a hello.

On the evening of that first Easter Sunday Jesus' disciples must have been terrified. Who stole Jesus' body? Will they be blamed? Will the authorities blame them? Are they in danger? Why are people saying that Jesus is risen? They were filled with uncertainty and they were terrified. So they locked themselves in a room, hidden away, seeking safety to figure out "what's next" and then, all of a sudden, right in their midst stood Jesus and he said, "Peace be with you..." As if to say, do not be afraid. I am here among you. "Peace be with you" were some of the risen Jesus' first words; words of comfort; words of reassurance; words of forgiveness. "Peace be with you."

The passing of the peace, this act of greeting became the act of forgiveness, an act of reconciliation. Historically, the passing of the peace follows the litany of confession or was part of the communion liturgy. It was the assurance of God's love. Many modern worshipers and wor-

(continued on page 2)

BETHEL UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

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vision & mission

Our vision is:

To receive and share Jesus' message of extravagant love through compassionate care for our community and the world.

This vision inspires us to be a church of mission where we seek to:

- 1 Know God and one another and open ourselves to be known.**
- 2 Be a church where people are comforted, encouraged, and challenged by God's Word.**
- 3 Serve as God's hands of mercy, affirming justice and peace in the world.**
- 4 Welcome and celebrate the diversity of people and thought, encouraging each individual's relationship with Christ.**

Passing the Peace

BY PASTOR KRISTEN CURLEE

ship leaders feel like it interrupts the flow of worship to have everyone get up out of their seats a third of the way through the service so we move it to where it fits more conveniently; but wherever we place it in our order of service, let us be reminded of its significance. Passing the peace is more than a casual hello, but it's not an act of personal affection. Rather it is gesture of mutual acceptance and forgiveness rooted in our shared humanity and made real in the risen Christ.

Each week as we rise to greet one another with the signs of Christ's peace may we remember that it is not a simple friendly gesture, but an act of faith—faith in the risen Christ who redeems us all. *Amen.*

ROY LOF SERVICES AT ARLINGTON CEMETERY

A graveside service at Arlington National Cemetery will be held on Tuesday, May 13, at 10 a.m. for long-time Bethel member Roy V. Lof, who passed away April 1 in Florida.

Roy, 93, was very dedicated to Bethel, holding nearly every church officer position at one time or another.

Bethel members are invited to attend Roy's service.



Roy Lof at the 2012 Strawberry Festival with Jean Rentch (left) and his daughter Kendra Szabo. (Some editions of the April Beacon mistakenly identified Kendra as her sister Terre Groupe. Our apologies.)

Every member of Bethel are the ministers



Head Usher for May
Peter Rich

staff & leadership

Senior Pastor
Rev. Kristen Curlee
pastorkristencurlee@gmail.com

Associate Pastor
Rev. Carolyn Richar
crichar@capitalhospice.org

Seminary Intern
Kim Moeller
kmoeller@aol.com

Church President
Whit Wheeler

Director of Music
Angie Stevens
angielatte@gmail.com

Interim Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Dr. H. Donald Smith

Help Send a Kid to Camp this Summer

SHAW COMMUNITY MINISTRY — BY JOYCE LEWIS

Since 1991, Shaw Community Ministry has been part of the outreach of the United Church of Christ in the Washington, DC area. The Ministry seeks to enhance the lives of children and youth living in the District's Shaw area by encouraging each child to reach his or her own potential academically and to behave responsibly. Trained staff mentor the young people in an afterschool program where they are able to do their homework in a safe environment and are given an after-school meal.

This summer, the children will have an opportunity to enroll in a daylong camp and participate in activities to continue to support their academic work. The camp will also sponsor field trips for the youth to learn more about the world outside the Shaw community. This year the theme of the camp will be "Shaw Community Values."

During the month of May, Bethel will be receiving donations for camperships to allow as many children

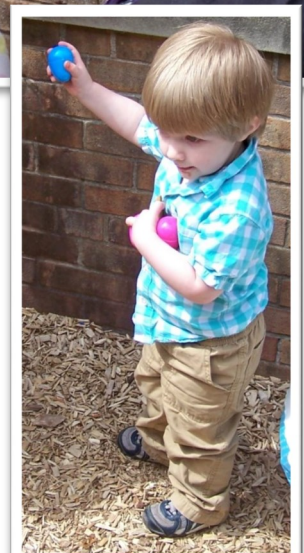
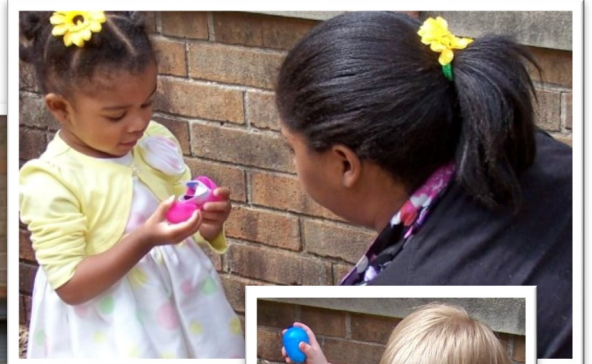


Participants in a past summer camp at Shaw Community Ministry.

of Shaw as possible to attend this enriching summer program.

To learn more about the Shaw Community Ministry you may visit their website at Shawministry.org or visit their page on Facebook.

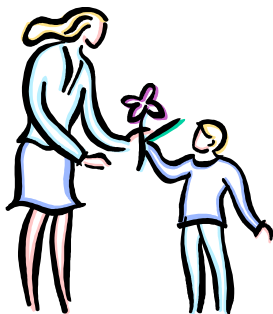
Bethel's Easter Egg Hunt



Photos by Art Lipman

Celebrating Kim's Time with Us... and our Mothers!

Be sure to join us Sunday, May 11 as we celebrate Mother's Day and bid a fond farewell to Kim Moeller, our seminary intern for the past year.



Kim will be preaching that Sunday, alas, her last at Bethel.

Kim has been a big part of our church life over the past year, from jumping right in by attending the all-church retreat last spring to ministering to many individually, including reaching out to members who are unable to attend regularly.

Fellowship time that Sunday will include a special recognition to Kim and all the mothers in our congregation.

Kim will receive her degree from Wesley Theological Seminary the next day at the school's graduation ceremony to be held at the National Cathedral. Bethel will be represented at the ticketed event.

We treasure your time with us and will miss you greatly, Kim!



UPCOMING EVENTS:

► CHURCH PAINTING DAY

Join us on Saturday, May 17th starting at 9 a.m. as we, with La Luz's help, paint Fellowship Hall, the Choir Room and the Youth Room.

► HYMN SING AT MARY MARSHALL HOUSE

We will join the residents of Mary Marshall House at S. 5th St. off S. Courthouse Rd. on Saturday, May 17th from 4 to 5 p.m. to sing some hymns as we remember Robert Woosley. Please contact Judy Lipman if you can bring cookies or dessert bars to share with the residents. We'll return to Bethel after the hymn sing for pizza and fellowship.

New early afternoon time!!


Strawberry Festival

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

NEW TIME: 12 - 4 PM


PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE AMERICAN RED CROSS



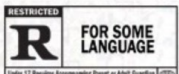


Community screening of the award-winning documentary

BRIDEGROOM



Bridegroom tells the emotional journey of Shane and Tom, two young men in a loving and committed relationship—a relationship that was cut tragically short by a misstep off the side of a roof. The story of what happened after this accidental death—of how people without the legal protections of marriage can find themselves completely shut out and ostracized—is poignant, enraging and opens a window onto the issue of marriage equality like no speech or lecture ever will.



A panel discussion with religious, lay and gay rights activists and thinkers follows

SUNDAY, JUNE 22 6 - 8 PM

“Thank You” for Donations of Goods and Time!

► Bethel delivered an additional 44 boxes of cereal to **Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC)** at the end of April, bringing our year-to-date total to 216 boxes—an impressive amount of assistance to those in our community who are food-insecure and a vital way of helping children in particular.



► Also in support of AFAC, many willing and able hands turned out for our periodic food bagging at AFAC (see photo at top right).



Our volunteers at Arlington Food Assistance Center who assembled family-size bags of oatmeal on April 4th.

► In addition, Bethel held a very successful toiletry drive in March for those who find overnight shelter at Arlington’s **Residential Program Center**. Over the course of the five Sundays in March, we collected a total of 263 items—ranging from toothpaste and

toothbrushes to soap, shampoo and body lotion.

Thanks to all who donated so generously in these important efforts to help those in our community who are in need.

WE’VE GOTTEN IN TOUCH WITH JOSHUA!

Strengthening our connection to seven-year-old Joshua, the Ugandan boy Bethel is sponsoring at Arlington Academy of Hope (AAH) in the African nation of Uganda, we recently sent him a montage of some of Bethel’s children.

You may contribute to the Joshua fund by placing an offering marked “AAH” in the collection plate any Sunday.



From Bethel Church’s children

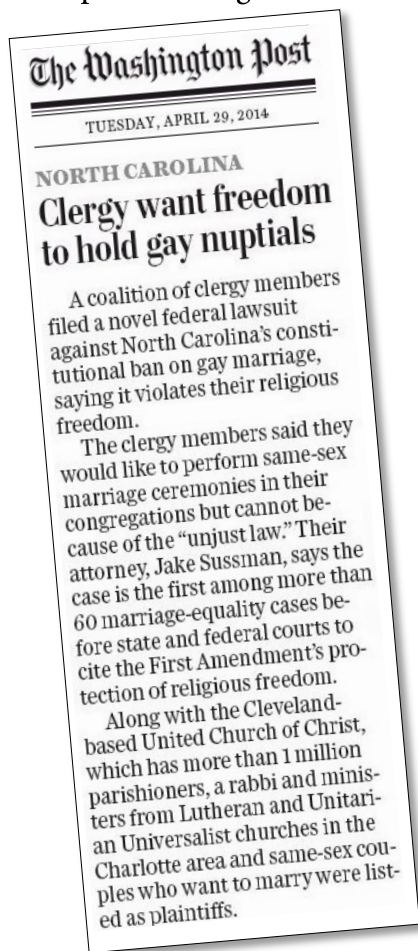


To our friend Joshua

UCC NEWS

Recently, you may have read the item below from the *Washington Post* and noticed that the United Church of Christ is a party to a lawsuit filed in North Carolina against the state's ban on same-sex marriage.

Rev. Dr. John Deckenback, UCC Central Atlantic Conference (CAC) Minister, elaborates on the action in a letter reprinted at right.



In a separate but related action the CAC has signed an amicus brief in the Fourth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals in support of a Federal District Court ruling that Virginia's marriage restrictions are unconstitutional.

In view of these actions, Bethel's upcoming screening of Bridegroom, a documentary on same-sex marriage, is particularly timely and should prove very educational. Please see the notice on page 4 and plan to attend!

Dear Friends in Christ,

Imagine that you are a pastor and one day a couple comes to you and asks you to marry them; you counsel with them and agree. The next day, another couple comes to you and asks the same of you, and state law prohibits you from agreeing to conduct their religious ceremony. Why should the state control a minister's pastoral decisions?

Or imagine that you are a minister making an emergency pastoral visit in a hospital. You arrive at the ER and learn that one member of this couple is dying due to injuries from an accident. His partner asks you to perform the marriage that was planned for two months hence. She pleads with you. Your pastoral heart and your conscience require you to offer this pastoral service. But state law not only prohibits you from conducting the marriage service without a license, but also will impose potentially large fines and a jail sentence of up to 120 days if you do.

In North Carolina, this is the reality for clergy. State laws have infringed deeply on the free exercise of religion. A pastor who chooses to perform a religious marriage for an elderly couple who does not want the state involved in their relationship at this stage of life—but want the affirmation of God and the Church—is prohibited from doing so. A pastor who is asked by members of his or her church to perform a same-gender religious marriage service will suffer retribution from the state.

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ has filed suit in federal court in Charlotte, North Carolina, contesting the constitutionality of that state's laws on marriage. These laws prohibit a clergyperson from performing a marriage without a license having been issued by the county in which the ceremony is to be performed. The basis for the Synod's suit is that these laws constitute an infringement of our constitutional rights of freedom of religion.

For us, as one of the founding religious traditions of this nation, the principle of free exercise of religion is a paramount value. Because we are not a hierarchical church, the freedom of every clergyperson to conduct the rites and sacraments of the Church according to the dictates of conscience is essential to our identity and our faith practice. These laws mean that a pastor cannot perform a service of religious marriage under the circumstances described above.

No matter what one believes about urgent or elder religious marriage or same gender religious marriage, the fundamental breach of free exercise of religion is what is at stake here. We cannot afford to allow this travesty of law to stand. Once government is allowed to dictate what we—or any other faith tradition—may or may not do in the practice of our faith, then we are truly on a slippery slope. This is where we take our stand. We do so not only because it affects our clergy in North Carolina so profoundly, but because we will always defend the free exercise of religion—*anyone's* religion.

I believe this is a very important step for the UCC to take in defense of the freedoms we hold dear. As far as we know, this is the first time a religious entity has sued on the grounds that these laws violate First Amendment rights, so we are breaking new ground. But it is ground that you and I need to have broken or our pastoral ministries in any other state could suffer the same infringement at some future time.

I encourage you to visit www.ucc.org/ido to learn more about this lawsuit and the reasons for it. It is important that we all understand the basis in law for this suit, and the basis in conscience as well.

Rev. Dr. John R. Deckenback

Conference Minister

United Church of Christ Central Atlantic Conference
916 S. Rolling Rd, Baltimore, MD 21228

May 2014 at Bethel UCC

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
				1	2	3
4 10 a.m. Worship/ Communion & Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship 11:30 a.m. Worship Committee meeting (Sanctuary) 11:30 a.m. Outreach Committee (Library)	5	6	7 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	8 12 noon Thurs- day Lunch (Library)	9	10
11 10 a.m. Worship & Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship	12	13	14 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	15	16	17 9 a.m. Church Painting Day 4 p.m. Hymn Sing at Mary Marshall House (see page 4) 5 p.m. Fellow- ship (and pizza) at Bethel
18 10 a.m. Worship & Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship 3-7 p.m. Spiritual Council Retreat	19	20	21 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	22	23	24
25 10 a.m. Worship & Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship	26	27	28 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	29	30	31

SAVE THESE JUNE DATES:

June 7 - Strawberry Festival 12-4 p.m.
Note the new earlier time – come for lunch!

June 22 - “Bridegroom” documentary
 screening & panel discussion 6-8 p.m.