

DECEMBER 2014

BETHEL UCC beacon

worship

DECEMBER 7

Mary: Birthing a Promise
Luke 1:26-38
Rev. Carolyn Richar

DECEMBER 14

Joseph: Shouts...of Joy?
Isaiah 62:1-4 & 8-11 &
Matthew 1:18-24
YOUTH SUNDAY

DECEMBER 21

Shepherds: Messengers of Hope
Isaiah 4:1-11 & Mark 1:1-8
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Christmas Music Festival **4 p.m.**
Arlington Forest UMC

Blue Christmas Service **7 p.m.**

DECEMBER 28

Joint Worship/Hymn Sing **11 a.m.**
Arlington Church of the Brethren

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

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



Trim the Tree and Deck the Halls!

BY PASTOR KRISTEN CURLEE

The Christmas season is here. Black Friday has come and gone with its door-buster deals. Christmas music floods the radio and holiday lights are popping up on every street corner. Each year, it seems, there is a story about Black Friday, or Thanksgiving Thursday as it may become, where shopping madness has gone awry. The huge deals are so good that people are willing to do anything to get there before the inventory is gone. Whether it is a fight over Tickle Me Elmo or a man trampled to death on the stoop of Walmart, it seems that the true reason for Christmas has been forgotten and all that remains is our capitalistic, market-driven culture of materialism.

Advent is the church's response to this amnesia. Advent is the four-week period when God calls us to pause and prepare, not for a holiday of gift giving, but to prepare for a holy day when we meet God face to face. Christmas is a holy day because God became one of us. Christmas is a holy day because God began a journey toward a cross and an empty tomb so that death would not have the final word. Christmas is a holy day because the invisible God of the universe became visible and dwelled among us. Christmas is a holy day because God's love was made known, not in a general's violent victory, but in the birth of a child. In God all things are possible.

In worship this Advent we will gather around the manger each week, looking, watching and waiting as we hear the words of the

(continued on page 2)

BETHEL UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

4347 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203

EMAIL BethelUCCVa@verizon.net

WEB www.bethelucc-va.org

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.**

From the Pastor *(continued from page 1)*

angels, as we imagine the lives of the shepherds, as we listen to Joseph's story, as we confront Mary's fear, pain and hope. Each of these characters, participants, in the holy story will gather around the empty manger with us waiting for the Christ Child to appear. It is our task, this Advent season to prepare our hearts and



minds for that gift. Let us seek forgiveness from those we've hurt. Let us prioritize our lives with God at the center. Let us share God's love with those we meet not with simple acts that make us feel good, but with genuine help that transforms lives. May this be our preparation this season.

THIS ADVENT BRINGS A REPLACEMENT ORGAN!



Bethel is receiving a gently used organ that arrives Tuesday, December 2nd and be fully installed and tuned for Worship on the 7th. It comes to us from Vinson Hall. It is the same type of organ as our current one, but more than 20 year younger. Our old organ was about 47 years old and we were expecting some expensive repairs in the next year to keep it functional, even as the sound quality continued to deteriorate. Total costs for installing the new organ are less than \$5,000 and was a gift from the Jean Merry Memorial Fund.

Every member of Bethel are the ministers



staff & leadership

Senior Pastor
Rev. Kristen Curlee
pastorkristencurlee@gmail.com

Associate Pastor
Rev. Carolyn Richar
crichar@capitalhospice.org

Church President
Whit Wheeler

Director of Music
Angie Stevens
angielatte@gmail.com

Interim Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Dr. H. Donald Smith

Living Gift Market Dec. 14th and 21th

Have you already been overwhelmed by the vast amount of commercialism associated with Christmas? Concerned that the true meaning of Christmas might be lost in the loud volume of the neatest-and-greatest-thing? Want to possibly dial back on adding yet another material good to your household and instead give something with a deeper and more pure meaning?

Well, Bethel has your answer.

This year Bethel is holding our Living Gift Market on two Sundays following Worship, the 14th and 21st of December, and it presents us with the opportunity to give a gift that continues to give beyond just the immediate. Instead of giving to ourselves, we give to those elsewhere that are in need. We have three groupings of gifts:

- **Church World Service:** examples of gifts include blankets, seed packets, educational toys, mosquito nets and emergency family food package
- **Lighthouse Free Clinic in El Salvador:** Bethel supports the doctor's salary of \$600/month
- **Arlington Academy of Hope:** Bethel sponsors the scholarship for Joshua to attend elementary school at \$360/year.

The Living Gift Market is a great chance to make a new Christmas tradition, and also teach your children/grandchildren/family/friends about the joy of giving to others, as you can give in their names as well as your own. The Market will be held in fellowship hall after worship. We look forward to see-ing you at the Market on the 14th and 21st of December!



Christmas Music Festival

Community Choir Holiday Event

At Arlington Forest United Methodist Church
Sunday, Dec. 21st at 4 pm.

Choir rehearsals are Wednesdays at 8 pm
at Arlington Forest UMC

ALL SINGERS INVITED!

Finding hope

*amid sadness at a
joyous time of year*

Blue Christmas

Sunday, December 21, 7 pm at Bethel

The Christmas season can be hard for many people burdened by grief, broken relationships, loneliness, financial hardship and stress. It can be a struggle to find joy in the music and celebrations of the season. Join with others on this longest night of the year, in a service of remembrance and pain, comfort and hope. Led by Pastor Kristen Curlee of Bethel Church and Chaplain Liz Pomerlau of Capital Caring.



A Light Is Drawing Near

★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

"It wasn't easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God's grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives."

"...thanks so much for sharing your time and ministry with me. Your most gracious gift is appreciated more than words can say as I continue to live in the 'meantime.'"

These eloquent words are from a pastor who is the recipient of the caring and concern of those who contribute to the Christmas Fund Offering.

You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in this year's Christmas Fund Offering.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors like the one above, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants,

and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks next December to low-income retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

Consider donating poinsettias to decorate the altar. They may be given in memory of one passed or in honor a cherished friend or family member. The plants, your preference of red or white, are \$10 each. The last day to order is Dec. 14th. A sign-up sheet is outside the office, or see Jean Luks.



Virginia Bronze
Handbell Ensemble
presents
*Colors of
the Season*

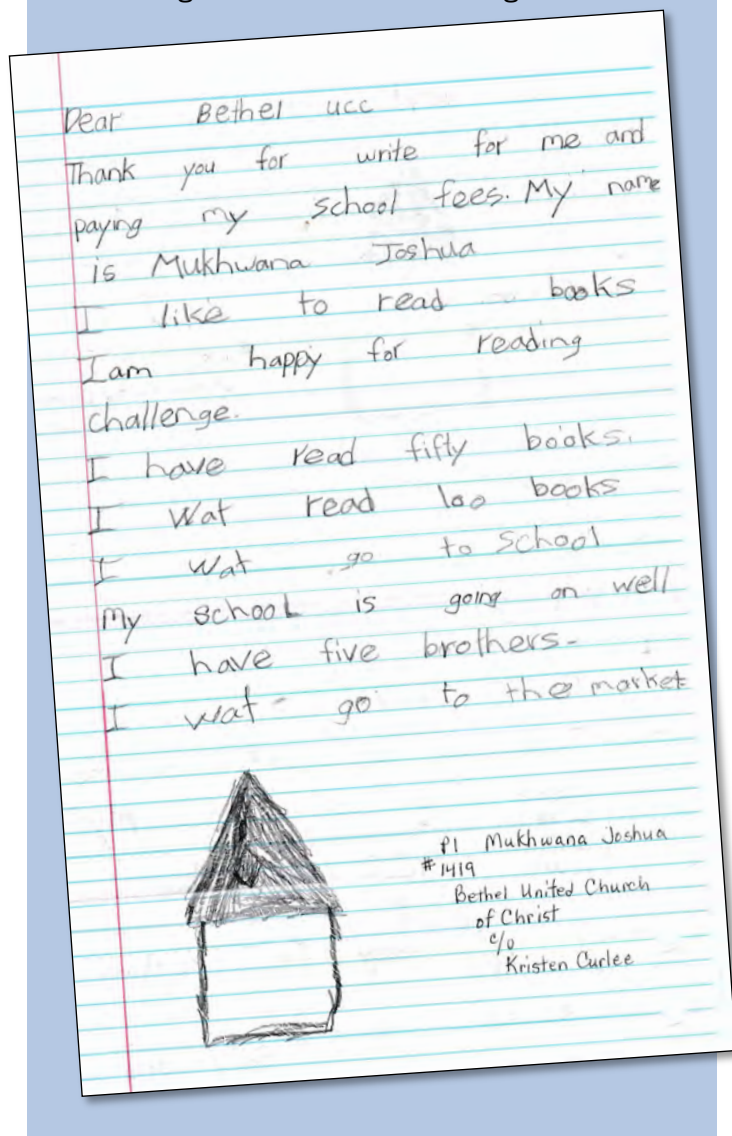


Sunday, December 14 at 4:00 PM
George Washington Masonic Memorial Theater
101 Callahan Dr., Alexandria, VA

For more information, see Peter Rich

UPDATE FROM JOSHUA

This year, Bethel has been providing for the education of 7-year-old Joshua, a student at Arlington Academy of Hope (AAH) in Uganda. AAH is a project that began at Bethel. Our children's offering each Sunday has been going to this fund as well. Joshua recently sent us this letter of appreciation and letting him know how he is doing.



DECEMBER FELLOWSHIP HOSTS

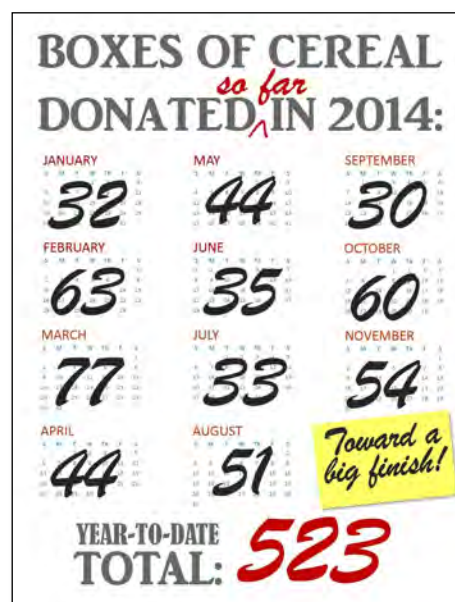
Thank you to Maggie Bernard and the Mills family for hosting Fellowship during December. Look for the 2015 sign-up poster this month during Fellowship.

Record Amount Raised in 2014 CROP Walk

The blisters are all healed and the money all collected from the 2014 Arlington CROPWALK held on October 18, 2014. The total from Bethel's walkers is a Bethel record \$7,270. Thanks to our walkers, Ralph Buglass, Kristen Curlee with Ward and Bekah, Cheryl Falcone with TimMyiah, Jaila, Annabel, and James Jr., Bill Graver, Richard Lee, Art Lipman with Judy Lipman, Amy Mills, Susan Peters, Lisa Petersen, Peter Rich, Carolyn Richar, Laura Wells with Mike Palermo, Judson and dog Jeter, and Kristen Wheeler for their efforts in getting sponsors, walking and collecting and especially to all who supported our walkers so generously. This means that \$1,817.50 goes to the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) and the rest to Church World Service for its campaign against hunger around the world.



There's only one month left in our 2014 cereal drive for AFAC. We long ago surpassed our goal of 365 boxes—one a day—so our sights are set on a big finish! Thank you for your continued generosity in December.



In addition, many have been continue all kinds of much-needed food and we recently sent AFAC a monetary donation (see next page).

You're Welcome, AFAC!



AFAC is a community-based non-profit that provides supplemental groceries to our Arlington neighbors in need.

November 4, 2014

The Reverend Kristen Curlee
Bethel United Church of Christ (UCC)
4347 Arlington Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22203-2904

Dear Reverend Curlee,

Our deepest thanks to Bethel United Church of Christ for the generous gift of \$1,575.00 to the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC).

July 1, 2014 marked the beginning of our new fiscal year. As we reflect upon the past year and prepare for the one ahead, it is clear that we will face a significant demand for our services. Since July 2013, the number of families in our care has increased by over 40%. At the beginning of the year, AFAC was serving an average of 1,430 families each week. We are now serving over 2,000 families, all of whom are residents of our very own Arlington community. The number of families we are serving and the amount of food we are distributing is unprecedented.

AFAC's ability to operate at the highest level and to continuously provide nutritious groceries to the growing number of families struggling in our community is made possible only because of the compassion and the generosity of individuals like you. Because no one should go hungry here in Arlington County, we hope you will continue to stand by AFAC as we work to give a helping hand to the least fortunate in our community. We are calling upon you, our friend, to tell a colleague, a family member, or neighbor about AFAC. The greater our support, the better our chances will be of providing food to the growing community of Arlington residents that seek our help.

Thank you for helping our many neighbors in need.

Sincerely,

Charles Meng
Executive Director

*YOUR GENEROSITY WILL
HELP A GREAT MANY
GOOD FAMILIES!*

P.S. If you would like to receive these letters via email, or would prefer one letter in January for the previous calendar year, please write development@afac.org.

Please use this letter as your receipt for your federal income tax purposes. In accordance with IRS rules, no goods or services were exchanged for this donation of \$1,575.00, on check number 1903, dated 10/16/2014. AFAC is a 501(c)(3), EIN 54-1473207.

2708 S. NELSON ST., ARLINGTON, VA 22206 • 703 845 8486 • WWW.AFAC.ORG # ARLINGTON FOOD ASSISTANCE CENTER @AFAC TWEETS • CFC#19265 • UW#8354 • CVC#8004

Dec. 7 Congregational Meeting Agenda Items

Our next Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 7th following Worship. The meeting will be preceded by a potluck lunch.

After several months of discussions and listening sessions, we will vote to modify our Open and Affirming Statement to recognize marriage equality. The proposed new language, which both Spiritu-

al Council and Consistory have approved, is printed below right, along with the current statement.

We will also vote on our church budget for 2015. The Finance Committee has proposed a balanced budget of \$158,953 specifying how our gifts and donations will support the various missions of Bethel.

Finally, we will nominate a

chair of our Nominating Committee and give a short overview of the various positions to be filled for 2015 (see the box at left).

2015 COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP SOUGHT

It is that time of the year where we look to you to request your time and your talents in order to help Bethel continue to carry out our good works and ministry. Without our Consistory leadership and committees, we would not have bills paid; provide cereal, backpacks, and toiletries to those in need; learn about community issues through our movie nights; appreciate the guest musicians or our own Bethel choir during worship; or enjoy fellowship time with that much needed coffee or tea after worship. If you ever wondered how any of these happened and want to help make sure they do, look no further!

Perhaps you have talents you use in your everyday life that you would be willing to share with the congregation by being a part of church leadership either as a member of Consistory or chairing a committee. Or perhaps you have a hidden talent that you would like to explore. During our February Congregational Meeting we will elect at least one new member to our Consistory to take over the great work Lisa Peterson has done as she moves out of the U.S. for her next job assignment. The following committees are looking for new leadership:

- Worship and Music Committee
- Outreach and Evangelism Committee
- Social Concerns Committee
- Property Committee
- Fellowship Committee
- Christian Education Committee

Are you thinking this will take up a lot of your time? Some of that will depend on you and your creativity! Many of the committees meet quarterly in order to keep the meeting dates to a minimum. Your committee members will be there to help move things forward. If you are interested in learning more about what being on the Consistory or chairing a committee entails, please contact Pastor Kristen to learn more.

RE-AFFIRMATION OF “OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT”

Final Draft for Congregational Vote Dec. 7:

Bethel United Church of Christ affirms and celebrates that we are all children of God, acknowledges that we all are in need of God's grace, and welcome diversity in race, ethnicity, mental and physical ability, age, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, family structure, religious upbringing, and interpretation of scripture. We invite all to share in the full life, ministry, and responsibilities of our church, including: worship, sacraments, rites, covenants, fellowship, leadership, commitments, blessings and joys. All are welcome as we follow Christ's example of unconditional love and welcome, and seek to serve one another in faith and love.

Current Open and Affirming Statement:

Bethel United Church of Christ affirms and celebrates that we are all children of God, acknowledges that we all are in need of God's grace, and welcome diversity in race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, family structure, religious upbringing, and interpretation of scripture. We invite all to worship with us, to follow Christ's example of unconditional love welcome, and to serve one another in faith and love.

We are looking for an editor for the Bethel 2014 Annual Report, which will be put together in January. Anyone interested should email Whit Wheeler at whit.w.5918@gmail.com.

December 2014 at Bethel UCC

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
	1	2	3 6:45 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	4	5 7 p.m. Bagging at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St. <i>Optional:</i> meet for dinner at 6 p.m. (Boston Market on Columbia Pike)	6
7 10 a.m. Worship & Communion / Sunday School 11 a.m. Congregational Meeting & Potluck	8	9	10 6:45 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	11	12	13
14 10 a.m. Worship / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship & Living Gift Market	15	16	17 6:45 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	18 12 noon Third Thursday Lunch (Library)	19	20
21 10 a.m. Worship / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship & Living Gift Market 4 p.m. Christmas Music Festival (Arlington Forest UMC) 7 p.m. Blue Christmas Service	22	23	24 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Service	25	26	27
28 11 a.m. Joint Worship / Hymn Sing (Arlington Church of the Brethren; NOTE SERVICE STARTS ONE HOUR LATER THAN OUR START TIME)	29	30	31	<div>Head Usher for Dec. Jean Luks</div>		