

JUNE 2015

# BETHEL UCC beacon

## worship

**JUNE 7**

**AFAC FOOD BLESSING**

**"I was hungry and you  
gave me food..."**

**Matthew 14:13-21**

**Rev. Kristen Curlee &  
Mr. Charlie Meng of AFAC**

**JUNE 14**

**PRIDE SUNDAY**

**Made in God's Image**

**I John 4:4-21**

**Rev. Kristen Curlee**

**JUNE 21**

**Meeting the Giant**

**I Samuel 17:1-49**

**Rev. Kristen Curlee**

**JUNE 28**

**Grieving Space**

**II Samuel 1:1-27**

**Mr. Jason Thompson**

**SUNDAY SCHEDULE AT BETHEL**

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

**11 a.m. Fellowship Time**

## 30 Years of Open and Affirming

BY PASTOR KRISTEN CURLEE

This month the General Synod of the United Church of Christ gathers in Cleveland, Ohio to conduct the business of wider church.

On its agenda is a revision of our Constitution and Bylaws, the election of the next General Minister and President and an important anniversary. This year the UCC celebrates 30 years of being an Open and Affirming denomination with more than 1,000 churches joining the movement.

In 1985, having already ordained the first openly gay man in 1972 in San Francisco and the first openly gay woman here in the Potomac Association in 1981, the United Church of Christ became the first main-line denomination to welcome and affirm all people regardless of sexual orientation. The resolution began:

*Whereas, the Apostle Paul said that, as Christians, we are many members, but we are one body in Christ (Rom. 12:4), and Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mk. 12:31) without being judgmental (Mt. 7:1-2) nor disparaging of others (Lk. 18:9-14); and*

*Whereas, recognizing that many persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation are already members of the church through baptism and confirmation and that these people have talents and gifts to offer the United Church of Christ, and that the UCC has historically affirmed a rich diversity in its theological and biblical perspectives; and*

*Whereas, the Tenth through Fourteenth General Synods have adopted resolutions encouraging the inclusion, and affirming the human rights, of lesbian, gay and bisexual people within the UCC.*

The full resolution can be found online at [http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy\\_url/259/ona-resolution-1985.pdf?1418423619](http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/259/ona-resolution-1985.pdf?1418423619).

As part of my Next Generation Leadership Initiative summer seminar  
(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.**

## From the Pastor *(continued from page 1)*

I will have the opportunity to attend Synod. I look forward to celebrating this important anniversary that widened our welcome and gave a voice to many who had been marginalized and excluded for generations.

After prayerful consideration and study, Bethel followed many of our brothers and sisters in Christ to become an Open and Affirming congregation more than ten years ago. This year we took the next step to live into that Covenant as we affirmed marriage equality. The scriptures remind us that God made all of God's children in God's image and God's vastness is made known in our diversity.

As marriage equality came to Virginia, in January, I was invited to officiate a wedding for Mark and John. They had a Holy Union service more than 20 years ago and have built a life together. They have been together in sickness and in health; in good times and bad; in the ups and downs of family, work and the loss of beloved pets. And on the anniversary of that first ceremony I was with them when we signed a marriage license making their vows legal. I give thanks to the United Church of Christ and Bethel that I was able to celebrate with Mark and John without wondering what the members of my church might think or without looking over my shoulder to see if someone from my denomination would try to take away my standing as a minister. Thank you for being part of the radical hospitality to which God calls us so that we might enjoy—the gifts of all people. This Pride Month there is much to celebrate.

Join us for Pride Month Worship on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>.

### *Bethel's 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, 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.

**Every member of Bethel are the ministers**



## staff & leadership

**Senior Pastor**  
**Rev. Kristen Curlee**  
[pastorkristencurlee@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkristencurlee@gmail.com)

**Associate Pastor**  
**Rev. Carolyn Richar**  
[crichar@capitalhospice.org](mailto:crichar@capitalhospice.org)

**Church President**  
**Whit Wheeler**

**Director of Music**  
**Angie Stevens**  
[angielatte@gmail.com](mailto:angielatte@gmail.com)

**Interim Pastor Emeritus**  
**Rev. Dr. H. Donald Smith**





# Strawberry Festival

Strawberries, ice cream  
& shortcake!

Hot dogs & other food!

Kids' games & activities!

**SATURDAY, JUNE 6 11 AM - 3 PM**  
**COMMUNITY YARD SALE BEGINNING AT 10 AM**

**Earlier time this year  
Come for lunch!**

## Welcome Seminary Intern Jason Thompson

Jason Thompson joins us this month as our Seminary Intern. He will preach on Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>.

Jason grew up in a small rural community in upstate South Carolina and was active in his Southern Baptist church throughout much of his childhood. He joined the United Church of Christ in 2010.

Jason has been heavily involved at Little River United Church of Christ in Annandale as a member of the Christian Social Action Committee and the Board of Outreach and Social Justice and served on the Board of Directors of Shaw Community

Ministry for three years, including one year as Vice President.

He graduated with honors from George Mason University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies and a minor in Islamic Studies. He is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree as a student at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC with plans to complete his degree in May 2016. Jason is acutely interested in traditional Reformed and more recent liberation theologies, believing that God longs for an all-inclusive

Church where all God's children will be extravagantly welcomed.

Jason lives in Fairfax with his husband Scott and their four cats. He is passionate about issues of environmental justice, racial equality and interfaith dialogue. He is very excited about serving as an intern at Bethel and looks forward to learning from Pastor Kristen, Pastor Carolyn and the entire congregation, especially the children. He is also delighted to be a part of Bethel's continued growth and outreach.

### COMMUNITY WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, JULY 5<sup>th</sup>

We will be worshipping at Arlington Church of the Brethren on Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> following the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. Please make a note; worship begins at 11 am at the Church of the Brethren, located at 300 N. Montague Street just further west off Rt. 50. Sunday School for all ages begins at 9:45.



*Bethel's Mother's Day worship included a special children's choir selection.*

There's still time to support our  
"Neighborly" **FOOD DRIVE**

Give a grocery bag to a neighbor to fill!



Pick up a bag or two in Fellowship Hall. Bags have instructions attached asking neighbors to contribute groceries for distribution by Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC). Then collect bags *before Sunday, June 7* when we will bless all donations at our 10 am worship service with special guest AFAC Executive Director Charlie Meng. (Instructions on the bag will also invite neighbors to bring their food donations to this service, if they wish.)

### ITEMS MOST NEEDED

- Low-sugar cereal
- Low-sodium canned tomato products
- Low-sodium canned tuna
- Low-sodium canned beans
- No glass please!

For over 25 years, the **Arlington Food Assistance Center** has been distributing groceries, directly and free of charge, to people living in Arlington who cannot afford to purchase enough food to meet their basic needs.

While hunger might not seem to be an issue in a wealthy county like ours, the high cost of living here combined with the current economic situation mean that many families struggle to make ends meet. Groceries from AFAC help families remain in their homes, workers stay on the job, children able to learn better, and mothers and babies have the nutrition they need.

AFAC currently distributes groceries to nearly 2,200 families every week. *More than one in every three people served are children.*

Families need a referral to receive food from AFAC to ensure that clients are legitimate, and that all of their needs are being assessed and addressed. Referrals must come from an Arlington County government agency or local churches, schools, or social service agencies.



Join Bethel volunteers in bagging food staples at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St. on Friday, June 5th at 7 p.m. Meet for an optional dinner beforehand at 6 p.m. at Boston Market on Columbia Pike. Many "regular" volunteers will be away, so "newcomers especially invited!"

**252**

boxes of cereal  
donated to AFAC  
as of the end of May



**600**

boxes altogether  
is our goal for 2015—  
thank you to everyone  
for your continued support



# Autism Awareness Outreach



Bethel's screening of the documentary "Sounding the Alarm: Battling the Autism Epidemic" for Autism Awareness Month concluded with a panel discussion featuring (from left): Teresa Thomas, mother of an autistic son; her husband Rev. Todd Thomas, Senior Pastor of Church in Bethesda (Maryland); Deborah Hammer, Autism Specialist for the Arlington County Public Schools; and Dr. Jennifer Ulbricht, Child and Adolescent Psychologist at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. Janna Lipman moderated the well-attended outreach and educational discussion.



In June Bethel will collect donations for the Strengthen the Church mission offering, one of four during the year within the United Church of Christ, which grows the UCC's future by:

- Funding new church starts and invigorating existing congregations
- Nurturing lay and pastoral leadership
- Building youth and young adult ministries
- Supporting the God is Still Speaking Ministry and its extravagant welcome for all within the United Church of Christ.

All gifts are directed to activities and programs of the Central Atlantic Conference as well as the UCC's national ministries.



Joanna dons our new acolyte robe in lighting the candles for a recent worship service.

# Long-Range Planning: Pulling Together the Ideas

Bethel's long range planning dialogue and listening sessions conclude this month by pulling together and prioritizing ideas expressed in the earlier sessions on how to best update and modernize our church building and facilities so that they support our current ministries and set the stage for the next phase of Bethel's growth.

This month's discussion sessions will again involve both a weeknight session (June 24<sup>th</sup>) and a Sunday post-worship (June 28<sup>th</sup>) to facilitate our busy schedules and encourage broad participation. Bethel President Whit Wheeler hopes these June discussions will help place all the ideas expressed into various priority categories such as "must-do" versus "nice-to-do" and seek to determine whether

the changes mentioned are needed in the near, medium or far term—1-2, 5-7, and 10-12 years, respectively.

If anyone is unable to make the discussion sessions, s/he is always welcome to provide input directly to members of the committee undertaking this effort. They include Whit as well as Trustee Peter Rich, Treasurer Judy Norton, Jean Luks as Spiritual Council representative, and Pastor Kristen. If anyone is unable to make the discussion sessions, s/he is always welcome to speak to committee members and provide input directly.

The committee hopes to generate a report that summarizes the results for this summer's Congregational Meeting, scheduled for Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>.



*Our recent sermon series on creation culminated with the blessing and then planting of a tree. The dwarf crape myrtle is now growing in front of the church building outside the office door.*

## NEW MEMBERS

We will celebrate new members on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested in joining Bethel at that time should see Pastor Kristen.

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Register now for Vacation Bible School (VBS)!

Bethel is joining with Arlington Church of the Brethren and Arlington Forest United Methodist to offer VBS for all ages this summer. It will be held daily Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> through Friday, August 7<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 pm at Arlington Forest UMC.

Each evening begins with a light dinner followed by a story and music, then there are multiple tracks with stations for the children and a faith formation class for the adults. Cost: \$25 per child (children under 2 are free), \$50 for a family of two or more. Nursery care provided. All volunteers will be background-checked.



## June 2015 at Bethel UCC

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 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)	<b>6</b> 10 a.m. Attic Sale 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Strawberry Festival
<b>7</b> 10 a.m. Worship & Communion / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Annual Meeting of the UCC Central Atlantic Conference (University of Delaware) through June 14	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 10 a.m. Worship / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 7 p.m. Bible Study (Library)	<b>18</b> 12 noon Third Thursday Lunch (Library)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 10 a.m. Worship / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 7 p.m. Long Range Planning Discussion Session (Library)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> UCC General Synod (Cleveland, OH) through June 30	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 10 a.m. Worship / Sunday School 11 a.m. Fellowship 11:30 a.m. Long Range Planning Discussion Session (Library)	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<div> <p><b>Head Usher for June:</b> Cheryl Falcone</p> <p><b>Fellowship Hosts for June:</b>  June 7: Maggie Bernard  June 14: Amy Mills  June 21 &amp; 28: <u>Hosts needed</u> - please sign up!</p> </div>			