

# BETHEL beacon

JANUARY 2017

## worship

JANUARY 1

Holy Communion  
Matthew 25:31-46  
"God's New Year"  
Rev. Patricia Barth

JANUARY 8

Matthew 3:13-17  
"The Baptism of Christ"  
Rev. Carolyn Richar

JANUARY 15

Isaiah 49:1-7  
"Polished Arrows"  
Rev. Patricia Barth

JANUARY 22

Matthew 4:12-23  
"Called Together"  
Rev. Patricia Barth

JANUARY 29

Matthew 5:1-12  
"Blessed Are You"  
Rev. Patricia Barth

10 am Worship  
11 am Fellowship

**BETHEL**

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

4347 Arlington Blvd. | Arlington, VA 22203  
www.bethelucc-va.org

## GETTING READY TO WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

BY CAROLYN RICHAR

*(This article is abridged from the sermon  
Pastor Carolyn preached on November 13.*

*The Arlington Connection also interviewed  
Carolyn for an article on Conversation Sabbath  
with photos of our worship service at  
this case-sensitive url:*

*<http://bit.ly/ConversationSabbath>)*

When you know you are going on a trip – do you plan ahead? Maybe get out a road map and check out the route to where you are going? Do you read a travel guide or look up reviews on the internet? Maybe you talk to friends who have been where you are going to get their recommendations? These are all part of my task list before I take a trip.

We Christians often talk about a trip we all hope to make one day – a trip to heaven – which we discuss in glowing terms – sing wonderful hymns about the joy we will know there – and celebrate Easter with shouts of Hosanna when we give thanks for the promise of eternal life at God's side.

But we rarely talk about the process of getting from this life to that next life with God. We seem to skip over dying and go straight from sitting here with each other – to sitting next to God. If only it were quite that easy. For a few of us – we may indeed take one breath here – and in the midst of a second or so – find ourselves at God's side without much warning. For the vast majority of us, we will reach a place in life where we know that it's end is approaching and we may have to deal with some illness or pain or even suffering emotionally.

In November, we recognized Conversation Sabbath – a week dedicated to encouraging faith communities to openly talk about planning for end of life care. We want to make sure we are preparing you and your family – as best we can – for what

*(continued on page 2)*



**all**  
members of Bethel  
are the ministers

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lies ahead at the end of life. This is not a sermon about death – it is one about walking through the valley of the shadow – about approaching dying – as honestly and openly as we can.

How many of you have already thought about your preferences for how you want to approach dying? For instance – do you want to be at home or would you prefer being in a medical facility of some kind? If you have a terminal illness diagnosed prior to death, do you want to do everything possible including operations, ICU stays, strong medications – or would you prefer to focus on comfort only – or perhaps take a more middle of the road approach? Have you chosen a family member or friend to be your decision maker if there is a time you cannot make your own decisions? These are all very important areas that we should each think about very seriously – then write down and discuss our preferences with those we want to be there with and for us when we are dying.

Over 70% of Americans say they have strong ideas/preferences about what they want as they are dying. Over 70% of Americans think it is important to discuss these preferences with family. Yet only 30% have talked with family about their preferences – and only 25% have actually written these preferences down.

Unfortunately, people are many times so unprepared for dying – that they get more caught up in trying to stay alive at any cost due to their fear of dying. Because they have not contemplated the end of life – contemplated a time when they will leave this Earth – leave family and friends – that the topic is just too terrifying to approach. Instead, there is this complicated but ultimately useless dance around avoiding the topic of dying with remarks like – “Just hang on – tomorrow they may find a cure!” or “We don’t need to talk about that (dying) – you are a fighter, you can beat this thing” or “We are praying for a miracle for you.” I personally believe in miracles and prayer – but not as tools to avoid talking about what we know will inevitably happen to each and every one of us. We will die.

So let us all be brave – and faithful – enough to discuss dying and death.

None of us are guaranteed even a minute from now. Ceilings can collapse – cars run red lights – people even fall off roofs. It is never too early to discuss what you want with those you love. The only trouble with discussions is that two people can hear the same words and come away with two very different perceptions of what the speaker wanted. As a hospice professional, I see this happen often with family members who are both sure they know what the loved one wanted – but they have two different perceptions and instructions for health care staff of what to do for the loved one. I have seen this type of situation tear families apart – with yelled accusations of abuse and neglect and long-simmering feuds of who was the favorite or who is just trying to get to the dying loved one’s money. I know I don’t want my family fighting at my bedside when I am the one who is dying.





So please, please – and please again – take time this month to write down in an advanced directive what you want as you are dying. If you have already written one – then take the time to review it yourself – and then review it with the people you have designated in writing to be your healthcare decision makers. I would include the goals for life you have – is it important to you to be as independent as possible? What does a good quality of life mean for you? Being able to hold a grandchild – watch a football game – go to church – listen to beloved music? It is different for each person – which is why it is so important to write down what you want. Then share your directive with additional family members as needed, and give them time to ask you questions.

So what's the spiritual end to this?

*“But we rarely talk about the process of getting  
from this life to that next life with God.”*

First – Dying is a very spiritual process for those who have at least a few days to understand death is near. For most people that I have worked with, the questions and conversations center around the meaning of life, around questions of faith like “Where is God? Will God accept me when I die? Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Am I ready to meet God?” These are important questions and it is so meaningful when someone actually has the time to discuss them with loved ones and clergy.

Second - Christians will die – knowing this, should we not prepare ourselves for this part of life's journey? Does a faithful person avoid uncomfortable topics – or is it a sign of faith to accept that dying and death will occur and our faith can be an important part of preparing us for these inevitabilities?

Third – Jesus is quoted in John as talking about going ahead of us to prepare a place for us in God's home. If Jesus prepared, I believe I should prepare also. Have you taken time alone – and with God – to think about dying? Perhaps you will think back to a loved one's dying time – is there a time of prayer – of study of Scripture – of just being with God – that will help you become more comfortable with thinking about dying?

*“If you can show even a bit of your faith to a loved one  
by being willing to accept and prepare for your dying process,  
you are giving a great gift to that person.”*

If you can show even a bit of your faith to a loved one by being willing to accept and prepare for your dying process, you are giving a great gift to that person. They may not see it or understand it now – but one day it will become that gift when they are not struggling to remember what you wanted or feeling guilty that they didn't “do everything” to keep you alive. Have the Conversation!

So – consider walking through the valley – it may not be an easy journey – but it may be one of the most meaning-filled ones you make. Prepare yourself – and prepare your loved ones – for your journey through the valley. Set aside the resources you may need – in writing – to help them remember your plan. A life lived well is one lived fully in every stage of life – even the stage of dying. May God strengthen and uphold us each as we make our preparations.

*May God strengthen and uphold us each as we make our preparations.*

*(Note: documents you may need to make your wishes known will be on the table outside the offices after January 1.)*



# ONLINE



# GIVING

Online giving allows members and friends the option of keeping up with those pledges and giving regularly even if you cannot make it to church every Sunday.

As you click through you will enter a secure portal where you can give on a regular basis or for special collections. You will enter checking account information and your account will be debited for the amount and at the frequency you specify.

It is easy to use, so give it a try! Click through from the green button on the homepage or use this case sensitive url:

[bit.ly/BUCCdonor](http://bit.ly/BUCCdonor)



# Vitamins, Ibuprofen + Acetaminophen Needed for Faro De Luz Clinic in El Salvador

As you are out shopping, your donations of vitamins (especially children's and prenatal) are always needed at the Faro De Luz Clinic in El Salvador. They also greatly appreciate donations of Ibuprofen (generic for Motrin or Advil) and Acetaminophen (generic for Tylenol). Finally, if you are cleaning out closets and have any gently used children's

## CROP Walk

More donations have come in, bringing us to a total of \$6860 for this fun October walk. Well done, Bethel!

## AFAC

A total of 505 boxes of cereal were collected for 2016! 149 were collected in December alone, making it a very successful month. Those helping unload at AFAC were very impressed with the number of boxes.

## Making Scarves for Homeless

Join in Arlington Church of the Brethren's fellowship hall on Saturday, January 14 from 10 am to 1 pm to make no-sew scarves by cutting a simple pattern into strips of fleece material. Please bring scissors + yard sticks if you have them. Extra fleece is always welcome too. We will give the completed scarves to ASPAN to distribute to people without homes this winter. Contact ACoB's office at 571-243-5344 or [acob@arlingtoncob.org](mailto:acob@arlingtoncob.org) with questions.

*Farewell to Angie*



*Welcome to Vivian*

# OFFENDER AID and RESTORATION (OAR): Strengthening Community Through Second Chances

We received these notes in thanks for the gifts we sent.

This is my first time being incarcerated. My first Christmas not at home. I didn't know this program existed. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to do this. Another way to connect with my son while in here. It is greatly appreciated!! Happy Holidays!

Dear friends at Bethel United Church of Christ,

This time of year is all about giving thanks. As a community service participant I am writing to thank you. With OAR's help, I have been able to avoid incarceration, keep my job, and stay home with my family by completing community service hours for my sentence.

OAR has been on this journey with me and they could not do it without your support. On behalf of so many of us who work with OAR, thank you and happy holidays!

Sincerely,  
Kelly





# 2016 No-Rehearsals Inter-generational Christmas Pageant

# January 2017

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Worship + Communion, 10 am</p> <p>Fellowship, 11 am</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Undecorating the Church, 10 am</p> <p>Pastor Vacation Begins</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Worship, 10 am</p> <p>Fellowship, 11 am</p> <p>Consistory/Long-Term Comms., 11:30 am</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Pastor Vacation Ends</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Worship, 10 am</p> <p>Fellowship, 11 am</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Bible Study, 7 pm</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Third Thursday Lunch, 12 - 1:30 pm</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Worship, 10 am</p> <p>Fellowship, 11 am</p> <p>Wesley Presentation, 11:30 am</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Bible Study, 7 pm</p> <p>Pray for Christian Unity</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Annual Reports Due</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Worship, 10 am</p> <p>Fellowship, 11 am</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>				