



# BETHEL beacon

MARCH 2017

## worship

MARCH 1

Ash Wednesday, 7 pm

MARCH 5

First Sunday in Lent

Arlington Children's Chorus Day

Community Worship

Arlington Forest UMC

MARCH 12

Second Sunday in Lent

The Stories that Shape Us

Genesis 12:1-4; John 3:1-17

MARCH 19

Third Sunday in Lent

The Stories that Shape Us

Exodus 17:1-7; John 4:5-42

MARCH 26

Fourth Sunday in Lent

The Stories that Shape Us

1 Samuel 16:1-13

10 am Worship

11 am Fellowship

**BETHEL**

UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

4347 Arlington Blvd. | Arlington, VA 22203

[www.bethelucc-va.org](http://www.bethelucc-va.org)

BY PATRICIA BARTH

## REMEMBER THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE POLICIES

Dear friends,

*In barely the space of a week, long-held American values of not discriminating on the basis of religion and welcoming (after vetting) refugees from war-torn areas were upended by Executive Order by the new President. An EO to build a wall at our southern border to keep out people fleeing gang violence or looking for a sustainable wage has also been issued. Although the Muslim refugee order was stayed by the court, another EO is pending. In the meantime, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has stepped up deportations, even waiting outside a Virginia homeless shelter at a church to capture people.*

*Jesus has a lot to say about this. In Sunday worship we considered the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the Poor; Blessed are the merciful; Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." (Mt. 5:1-12). In the passage at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, sometimes called The Last Judgment, Jesus said: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me in."*

*The testament of the Hebrew Scriptures is even more clear—here is just one of many examples: "You must not oppress foreigners. You know what it's like to be a foreigner for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)*

*Behind these Executive Orders are real people who are being affected in tragic and frightening ways. John Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ lifts up some of these people in his Commentary (1/30/17):*

*"Esther was on staff of the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ when I arrived there in 2008. She was the daughter of a Mexican diplomat who had been stationed in Phoenix for over 20 years. Her father was sent to serve in that position when she was just a baby. When I met her, she was in her early 20s and was helping organize our church camps and youth ministries.*

*Shortly after I arrived, her father died. She lost her status and was threatened with deportation. She didn't speak Spanish. She had no family in Mexico. She had lived in the U.S. for practically her*

*(continued on page 2)*

**all**  
members of Bethel  
are the ministers

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whole life. She had no options. Because of her father's position with the government, she was a high profile immigrant without status. She couldn't hide.

She was also in a partnered lesbian relationship. Going back to Mexico without home, language, and family would only have been exacerbated by that relationship. She did the only thing that made sense to her: she fled to Canada, where she remains to this day.

In the eight years I spent in the Southwest, I met family after family with similar stories and circumstances. Having lived in Missouri for all of my life until 2008, I was aware of and sensitive to the danger that recently emigrating to the U.S. could mean for good people. But I really had no personal knowledge or experience of that pain and what it did in the lives of good people.

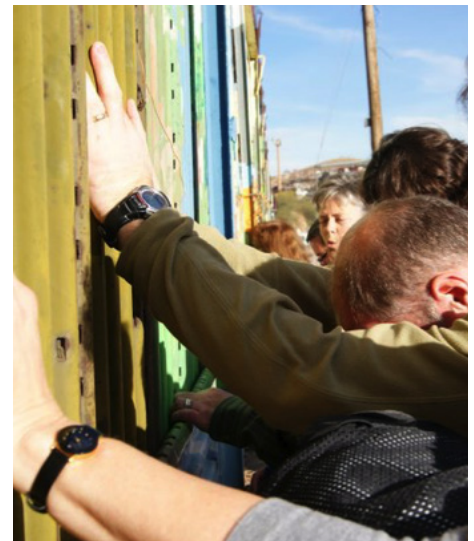
There weren't many days after my move to the Southwest when I failed to come face to face with that pain.

The first time I worshiped at Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita, Ariz., I heard the pastor Randy Mayer speak these words: "We are a church on the border called to serve the immigrant." I sat next to the Rev. Delle McCormick, at the time the executive director of an immigrant relief organization. Sitting with her was an undocumented 17-year-old from Guatemala who spoke no English and was within days of delivering her first child. She survived her trek from her homeland to her hopeland, but barely.

Before the week was over, Rev. McCormick would call to report that the Guatemalan teenager had been taken to an area hospital, delivered her child – and was detained by Border Patrol and dropped back over the border, far away from home with a child days old and with no money or shelter.

I've sat in a courtroom for hours and watched a little known policy called Operation Streamline destroy the lives of scores of people and their families.

About every half hour, a group of a dozen or more immigrants and refugees, chained together and wearing bright orange jumpsuits, were marched in to sit in the front of the courtroom before a judge. They were accompanied by one or two pro bono attorneys



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they may have met less than an hour ago and with whom they may have had about ten minutes' time to prepare for what was about to happen.

One by one, the judge would read a name on a list that was just handed to him. He would ask that person to stand, read their crime (essentially crossing the border illegally) and ask them if they were guilty of that crime. Since most of them did not speak or understand English, they would turn to their attorney who would nod and tell them to say yes. They would say "yes," and in so doing plead guilty to a felony conviction. That they had wives and children waiting for them who knows where is irrelevant. Later that day they would be dropped somewhere, anywhere, across the border, often without the family they were leaving behind knowing where – and because they had pleaded guilty (wittingly or not) to the felony, they were now prohibited from crossing the border legally again. Ever.

I sat with pastors who buried immigrants who had been warehoused and died in Sheriff Joe Arpaio's Tent Villages: outdoor cells where detainees were kept in 115+ degree summer heat with little water or shade.

I have walked miles of a wall, on both sides of the border, that separates families and restricts what have been millennia of natural migratory patterns of animals who now have no idea what to do. The wall is a disgrace, as are the drones that fly over U.S. soil (the United States allows our government to spy on its own citizens with drones within 100 miles of the border).

I've walked the migrant trails that refugees and immigrants use to try and find their hope. Peppered with torn and tattered clothes, empty gallon milk jugs, and a variety of personal items left behind from backpacks to jewelry to photos and so much more. The worst is walking by a bush with a bra hanging from it: a sign that a trophy is being hung by someone who raped the woman who once wore it.

Those who walk these trails daily find dead bodies or bodies badly beaten by an unrelenting sun in an unforgiving ecosystem. These saints and unsung heroes are among the most humanitarian beings on the planet. They rescue people and save lives and provide temporary solace, comfort, and compassion before those whom they discover are handed over to Border Patrol.

### **I will never again be unaware of the effects of our policies on people who see America as their hope.**

Not too long ago, I walked out my door and met a woman in a hijab with two children struggling to carry a broken and discarded piece of furniture up the street to their home. I helped them with the furniture and learned they were refugees from Syria. Dad was not helping them because he was home recovering from the torture he endured at the hands of Syrian rebel forces.

On a trip to the Middle East, I stood outside tents that had become homes to some 250 Syrian refugee families, just a kilometer from the Syrian border in Jordan. Inside those tents were doctors, lawyers, teachers. One father told me, that although his family was living in these deplorable conditions on the \$20 of relief that the U.N. was able to collect, and about a six mile walk through desert heat to the nearest grocery store – that tent was the first place his child was able to sleep at night and not be afraid. I held babies in my arms, sat with children in the tent that served as their classroom, drank coffee with some of the men from the camp and listened to their stories. Not one of them, not the fathers nor the mothers nor the children nor the babies, struck me as a terrorist.

I walk away from these encounters with a heart warmed by the hospitality of strangers. And I wonder why the richest nation on earth is being asked to hate and fear them rather than return their hospitality."

*Bethel, our Still-Speaking God is calling us to action. Along with more than 2,000 other religious leaders, I've signed a letter to the President and Congress supporting refugee resettlement which you can read on the website [interfaithimmigrationcoalition.org](http://interfaithimmigrationcoalition.org). There are many other suggested actions there.*

Yours in Christ,  
Patricia+



# THE PEOPLE'S WHITE HOUSE:



## Public Cleansing and Blessing

**When:** Mondays in February at 12:15 pm. No more than 30 minutes. (We hope to continue into March; check contacts below.)

**Where:** Center of Lafayette Square across from the White House. McPherson Square Metro is closest. *If you can't get there, please pray with us wherever you are on Mondays, any time from 12:15 to 12:45 pm.*

**Who:** All are welcome. Organized by Terry LePage, a United Church of Christ minister who feels called to take spiritually-based action. Wear religious symbols or clothing if you wish.

**What:** First, quiet personal prayer and/or ritual. Then, public prayer in the spirit of Rev. Dr. Walter Wink [Engaging the Powers] to claim the White House for God's love and justice for all people. We pray the same prayers first for ourselves, then for the White House, then for the country. Consider this public theater or action on a spiritual plane; either way it is powerful. Strictly nonviolent and respectful.

**Your Input:** Suggestions, support, co-leadership, lunch afterward... welcome! We hope to make this event ongoing and "interfaith but not generic," and need help doing so. Please contact us.

**RSVP:** to receive timely updates. Note that when and where may change in March. Questions and suggestions (collaboration) welcome. join the Facebook group: **Spiritual Action for USA** (and get more info, like...what do we pray?) Or email: [Terry@opendoorcommunication.org](mailto:Terry@opendoorcommunication.org). Or both!

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## The Stories that Shape Us: LENT at BETHEL

The season of Lent means different things to different people. For some, it is a time of fasting and repentance; others may explore new spiritual disciplines—a "taking on" rather than a "giving up." Many use this time to celebrate their baptisms.

At Bethel, worship will focus on the stories central to our faith—the Good Samaritan, the journey of Abram and Sarai, the Exodus, the raising of Lazarus and more. Your pastors invite you to read over the lessons before church during the next month and a half, and see how it deepens your worship experience.

Since hymns shape us just like stories do, please e-mail me and share old favorites that you would like to sing during Lent. For Wednesday night, we'll use the book *Plenty Good Room: a Lenten Bible Study based on African American Spirituals* by Baldwin and Thornton.

# Arlington Academy of Hope

Did you know this mission of the Arlington Academy of Hope was started by a former member of Bethel UCC? Here is a paragraph from founder John Wanda about the start of the school:

On February 2, 2004, a school bell rang for the first time at the Arlington Academy of Hope in Bumwalukani village. Seventy-eight children, from ages 6 to 13, excitedly filed through the new doors to their new classrooms. Each boy wore a checkered shirt, grey shorts and stockings, and black shoes. The girls wore a checkered dress, red stockings, and black shoes. Each girl or boy carried a backpack, in which there was a math set, six exercise or notebooks, two pens, a pencil, a one-foot ruler, an eraser, a sharpener, and some crayons. Each child had a classroom, all the scholastic materials they needed, and a teacher ready to teach them on the first day of school.

None of these things, from a building to school supplies to shoes was available to these children in Uganda before the establishment of Arlington Academy of Hope.

Bethel UCC currently supports Joshua by paying his school fees. Stop by the new display created by Judy Lipman on the Academy of Hope at Fellowship Time. Consider making an additional donation by writing a check to Bethel with AAH on the line or going online to: <http://bit.ly/ArlingtonAcademyOfHope> (case-sensitive url).



## 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)



Arlington Junior school,  
P.O. Box 1647,  
Mbale Uganda,

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016.



Dear Children

My name is Mukhwana Joshua and I am (11) eleven years old, I love you so much for paying my school fees and my teachers love you so much because you send for me a very good letter. I am the 15<sup>th</sup> in my class primary three. I am working hard to go to the next class primary four. My parents love you so much and they tell me to tell you to come and see us. I have two sisters and two brothers and I can draw our house hear.



Your friend

Mukhwana Joshua



## ARLINGTON FOOD ASSISTANCE NETWORK



Arlington Food Assistance Center provides supplemental groceries to over 2,200 low-income families who may not have enough to eat. Over one-third of the people served are children.

Our 2017 goal: 500 boxes of cereal brought to church!

Join us in packing, it's a lot of fun. Next day: April 7

## UPDATE FROM ANGIE STEVENS



I'm having fun at my new job at Trinity Presbyterian in Herndon. It feels like college again, since there's always so much music to practice. The choir has about 35 people, and we have rehearsals on Wednesday nights.

For Christmas Eve, we had a brass quartet, cello, flute, and handbells. I've had to learn many new organ skills as quickly as possible. It's fun to play my new organ - it has four manuals (keyboards) and about a billion stops.

Thank you for the Amazon gift card and the nice thank you card with so many well-wishes. I hope you're all doing well and that you had a great Christmas!

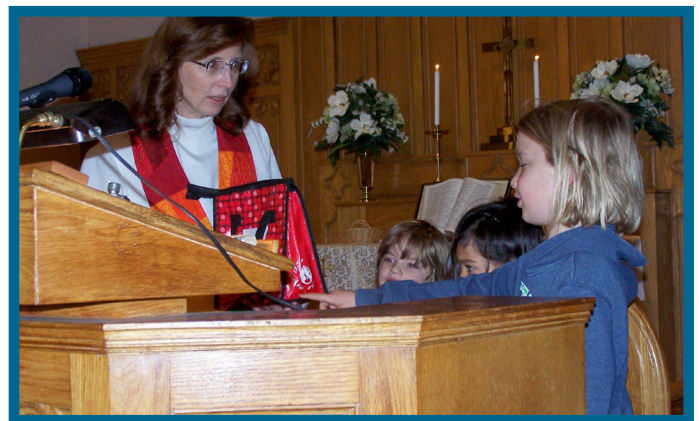
## PHOTO NOTES + UPDATES



The children enjoy eating together at fellowship time.



Chris Marshall of Wesley Housing Development Corporation informs us of plans for the Red Cross lot where Bethel parks. They will build low-income housing and some townhomes.



Pastor Carolyn uses a weight to remind us that whichever emotion we exercise, love or hate, is the one that gets strongest.

# March 2017

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
			1 Ashes to go, 5-6 pm Ash Wednesday Service, 7 pm	2 Exodus Study, 12 pm	3	4
5 Worship at AFUMC, 10 am	6	7	8 Soup, 6:15 pm Lent Study, 7 pm	9	10	11
12 Worship, 10 am Fellowship, 11 am	13	14	15 Soup, 6:15 pm Lent Study, 7 pm	16 Third Thursday Lunch, 12 pm	17	18
19 Worship, 10 am Fellowship, 11 am	20 Meeting at ACOB, 7 pm	21	22 Soup, 6:15 pm Lent Study, 7 pm	23	24	25
26 Worship, 10 am Fellowship, 11 am Consistory, 11:30 am	27	28	29 Soup, 6:15 pm Lent Study, 7 pm	30	31	