



Feeding the Mind, Spirit, and Body of Farmworkers and our Neighbors in Need.

Community

What comes to mind when you think of community? Is it the place where we live, or is it how we live together? Our Beth-El community extends beyond any geographic boundary. It includes all who enter our doors seeking assistance, or those who come to offer aid. It also involves you, right now, as you read this note. Living as community comes from the heart. It is an intentional act of inclusion -- of caring beyond our own personal needs.

Emma is a member of Nuevo Camino, and a faithful volunteer for most of the mission's activities. She oversees the food distribution on Tuesdays. Recently, she has started helping at the dental clinic. Emma comes and sits with the patients while they wait or helps with registration. Most patients are anxious, and certainly in pain. Some she recognizes from the pantry and is sure to call them by name. Just her being there offers comfort to our community.



All of us at Beth-El want our community to thrive. We want all those who seek an education to have the resources available to

do so. We want all our neighbors to have safe shelter and enough food on the table to support their family. We want all of these things because we are part of this community, too.



Living in community is particularly hard when, on the best of days, many of our neighbors will fail to thrive. They will drop out of school to help their family, or struggle to find a safe place to live. Living as community is very difficult when one medical emergency can wipe out your entire life savings or the weariness of life haunts you from repeated disappointments.

Recently a group from the Middle East visited the mission. After touring, one of the visitors asked me why we do what we do when the deck seems so stacked against those we serve? The rest of his group paused to wait for my response. As I considered how best to answer, I could hear the sounds of laughter from our kitchen where members from the Church of the Palms were busy carving turkey for the thanksgiving meal we would serve at a local farm the next day. *Why do we do this?* Because being part of a community means caring for one another through both laughter and tears.

It is the season of Advent, when we wait and remember the journey to Bethlehem. By all appearances the deck was most certainly stacked against the young couple traveling to the city of David. Under a blanket of stars, within an occupied land, Mary and Joseph searched for a place of shelter. The pangs of childbirth unceasing despite no room found at the Inn, but to the melody of bleating sheep, a child was born. *And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* Why do we do this? Because God offered a way, and continues to join us in the journey.

From all of us at Beth-El, thank-you for being a part of our community.

Merry Christmas!

**Rev. Kathleen (Kathy) Dain
Executive Director**



Thanks to your support the Mission will distribute over 350 tons of resources like food, hygiene products, blankets, and clothing to over 20,000 families in 2018.

Pastor's Pen

I wish you all a blessed and meaningful Christmas Season.

The Advent season at Nuevo Camino is a time of active waiting as our worship, activities and fellowship focus on preparing our sanctuary, hearts and homes for God's gift to us through the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2: 4-7)



Last December leaders decided to celebrate *las Posadas*. And what is a *Posada*, you

might ask? The tradition of the Posadas was brought to Mexico in the 1500's by Catholic Missionaries from Spain to teach about and to commemorate Mary and Joseph's difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a place for the Christ Child to be born. In Spanish, Posada means dwelling or lodging. The Posadas run from December 16 for nine evenings, in different locations, until December 24. (For more information, check out: Welcome, the Message of Las Posadas, Cherry Crayton).

In Mexico the tradition is almost exclusively Roman Catholic. Yet we planned for an abbreviated version at the beginning of worship. The faithful at Nuevo Camino hail from Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the United States and most did not celebrate this tradition in their home countries.

Our community sang about Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and their urgent search for shelter. We sang about how humble Mary and Joseph were turned away from multiple places, even as Mary was about to give birth to our Savior. We sang of their desperation--and we celebrated with joy, singing about the busy innkeeper with a house full of lodgers, who saw their need and responded with compassion-- offering refuge in a stable.

I look forward to Las Posadas this year on December 16 during morning worship. I also extend an invitation to you to join us on December 23 at 3p.m. when we'll gather for Christmas hymns and our Christmas play. Santa arrives after worship to share gifts from the Adopt a Family Program.

Peace and Blessings,



Rev. Tamara Leonard Lara
Pastor, Nuevo Camino at Beth-El
813-633-1548 Pastor@beth-el.org



Sally and I and our "Little Guy" are very happy to be back at Beth-El again this year and really appreciate the warm greeting we have received from both the staff and the community. Our first clinic this season allowed us to vaccinate 103 animals. Certainly, a great feeling and we thank you all!! I would love to share some information that has led us to this point in time.



- Basic veterinary care is just beyond the economic reach of many of the migrant farm families with the marginal salaries they earn. This is in addition to the increasing cost of veterinary services. We are reaching a crisis of sorts in the veterinary profession with appropriate access to care being a real issue for a significant segment of our population. However, we also recognized the importance of pets to their families and wanted to try and bring a bit of that basic care to those pets. So early in the program, out of our comfort zone we went (not speaking Spanish!), and undertook a basic veterinary care project in the Migrant Farm Worker Community. We initially reached out to Beth El Farmworker Ministry

which is in partnership with the USDA in the "Stop Hunger" program. That program distributes bags of groceries each Tuesday to about 500 families in that community. Beth-El readily accepted our offer for a partnership and off we went, with our freshly printed yard signs - in Spanish - advocating for free vaccination of their pets. Although cautious at first and reserved regarding accepting the program, that seems to have changed. We were able to enlist a community-based translator (thank you Linda!) and eventually gained the community's trust. Over the last three years, we have been able to vaccinate over 1,100 animals for Distemper, Parvovirus and also Rabies..

The two major motivating factors/needs for the project were as follows.

1) We were cognizant of the problems with multiple outbreaks of Parvovirus infections in the community and its devastating effect on the health and wellbeing of their animals as well as the bond between those animals and their families. In a general population, reaching a critical percentage of animals that are vaccinated against a disease will help to prevent if not eradicate that disease from that population. We did not have good data at this point regarding the total number of animals within the Farm Worker Community, however we figured the best approach was to enlist the community's help and vaccinate as many as possible. It certainly should make a difference in controlling outbreaks of disease and the loss of their pets.

2) The pet population is also the barrier between wildlife and the human population in the spread of Rabies to people. There are in the vicinity of 7,000 to 8,000 cases of rabies in the US every year. Wild animals accounted for 92% of reported cases of rabies in 2013, (the year with the most complete data). Raccoons continued to be the most frequently reported rabid wildlife species (32.3% of all animal cases during 2013), followed by bats (27.2%), skunks (24.6%), and foxes (5.9%). We obviously still have an issue with Rabies in this country and the best thing we can do to protect ourselves and our families is to reach out to that pet population to provide Rabies vaccinations and create a "barrier" for the protection of our health. This is a classic "One Health Initiative" whereby the health of animals is directly tied to our own health and wellbeing.

Thank you all for letting us be a part of this community!

Barry and Sally Kellogg and "Little Guy"

Serving at Beth-El

Recently I was asked how I came to know Beth-El and what has kept me serving there for so many years? I had never really thought about that, so I made a "mind journey" back in time.



I was privileged to be associated with the group of Cumberland Presbyterians who first went to Ruskin and initiated a project to serve the needs of the migrant farmworker population living in that area. I learned of the difficult lives our farmworkers endured and their need to have a place to worship and fellowship. Their stories made clear the true meaning of one of my favorite passages from scripture: *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear Children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth."*

[I John 3:17-18 NIV,]

As needs became more evident and greater, they and our Presbyterian covenant



partners never faltered in efforts to expand the mission's resources to fulfill the growing needs of the resident population. Today, our mission is a large ecumenical organization with many programs designed to do exactly that. Not that it has been an easy journey, because it is not, and possibly never will be!

Why have I stayed? I think part of it is the deep love and respect that I have for the people I have served with, many of them no longer with us. I have learned so much from their deep and abiding love for their fellow human beings and a dogged pursuit of truth, fairness, and justice. They are truly a gift from God.

There are so many opportunities for service at Beth-El. In the month of November, I attended the Annual Corporate Meeting as a representative of Grace Presbytery, CPC.; a couple of committee meetings, an Executive Board Meeting and the opening of our new free Dental Clinic. Best of all, my daughter-in-law Heather and I were Javier's "Team One", (mashed potatoes for 370 people) for "Thanksgiving Dinner at the Farm". It is impossible to have an over-inflated ego if you are a volunteer at our mission. Both Revs' Kathy and Tamara will mop floors if called upon. There are so many areas of projects and needs. The joy that Beth-El has given to me is far greater than anything that I could do for it and the people it serves.



Please, come join us as a volunteer. I hope to see you there.
Blessings of the Season,

Sue Rice
Co-President
Beth-El Board of Directors





Sights and Sounds of Thanksgiving at the Farm

How to Give to Charity (Beth-EI)

and Save on Your Income Taxes!

CORRECTION Article on Charitable Giving and deductibility of contributions



In the previous edition of our newsletter there was a mistake with regard to deductibility of contributions to charities such as Beth-EI from the donor's IRA, 401(k) or other tax sheltered fund but only for donors over 59 ½ and under age 70 1/2. It said that if the donor is over 59 ½ years old such a contribution from the tax shelter would not be considered taxable distribution since the funds went directly from the Custodian to the charity. This is incorrect. Such a distribution would be taxable.

But if you are over 70 ½ you are required by law to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) each year. By instructing the Custodian of your IRA, 401(k) or other tax sheltered fund to send the contribution directly to a charity such as Beth-EI this contribution is not taxable to you since the money is not received by you but sent directly to the charity by the Custodian.

Dave Young
Board Member

Volunteer Opportunities

Beth-EI has a number of opportunities for volunteers who



Many thanks to the volunteers from St. Andrew Presbyterian, Sun City Center. Who volunteer every week. If you'd like to learn more about our volunteer opportunities, please email us at info@beth-el.org.

I would like to become more involved at Beth-El Mission as a Volunteer:

- Lunch at the Farm (Sept-May)
- Food Pantry
- Lead VBS
- Organize a Workgroup
- Organize a Food Drive
- Organize a Clothing Drive

would like to share their professional skills to help improve the quality of life of our farm working families, including:

- Mentors - For career coaching and job interview training.
- Teachers - Bi-lingual who can help with basic skills (ESOL, GED).
- Dentists/Hygenists - to add to our volunteers for our clinic.
- Translators - to work with professional dental teams.
- Counselors - (bi-lingual) to help with needs assessments.

I would like to donate \$_____

- Summer Camp Scholarships
- Back to School Program
- VBS Supplies
- College Scholarships
- Music Lessons for Youth
- Food Pantry
- Mission's Greatest Need

Immediate Needs

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry has an immediate need for the following items:

- Bath Towels
- Deodorant
- Baby Formula (Enfamil)
- Socks
- Shoes
- Hats (baseball style)
- Men & Women Light Jackets
- Men's Pants Sizes 30-36
- Toothpaste
- Bar Soap
- Razors



**A Printable Copy of this Newsletter is Available on our
Website at: www.beth-el.org or by emailing us at:
info@beth-el.org**

Leave a Lasting Legacy



Consider making Beth-El Farmworker Ministry part of your will or living trust. Your gift will help the farm working community for generations to come.

Support Beth-El Mission with your online contribution today.



Beth-El
Farmworker Ministry, Inc.

Fueled by Volunteers and Your Faithful Prayers and Support

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Wimauma, FL 33598-0860

Phone: 813-633-1548

Email: info@beth-el.org

Web: www.beth-el.org



Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is open Monday through Thursday from 8a.m. to 5p.m., Friday 8a.m. to 2p.m. Other times by appointment.

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry Staff

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