

October 2019

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**BeTh-El**  
*Farmworker Ministry, Inc.*

# Home

It was a bright shade of harvest yellow dulled over the years from the brown stains of nicotine that unforgivingly clung to the walls. Ours was a typical kitchen from the 70's right down to the avocado green appliances.

One winter, Dad replaced our old Formica table with his latest project -- an old library table from his family home that he had painstakingly spent the winter refinishing. Dad spent hours working on it -- soaking its legs in preparation for new wood veneer -- the oval top stripped and stained to a rich oak that mother's cigarette would later engrave.

It was at that table that I sat and dipped pennies into tabasco sauce to revive their shine, where poppy would pour the entire contents of the sugar bowl into his coffee when he thought no one was watching. It was the place where mom would busy herself with the latest crossword, or where my best friend Max and I feasted on endless waffles. It was home -- a sanctuary of tears, and laughter. Life happens at the table, and it seems to me that no matter how many times we sand away the rough spots, an errant ash still awaits to leave an indelible mark behind.

For nearly five years I have called Beth-El home. It has been a place of immeasurable grace for myself and for many who have sought refuge from the challenges of daily life. I have indulged in countless tostadas prepared by our dear Maria. I have cheered for our young children taking the first steps into adulthood, and wept beside those who mourn. It is home for myself and for many



The lives of our farm working families have always been fragile, but today the certainty of where they will work and live seems more precarious than ever. We have watched as many in our community have lost jobs that they have held for 10 or 15 years because they can no longer meet the current regulations for documentation. Other families have been displaced from their homes as larger farms move toward bringing in H2A workers here on a temporary visa.

Last Wednesday members of the mission and faith leaders gathered at the table to discuss the current challenges facing our community. Thoughtfully we listened; prayerfully we heard the incarnate Word of God spoken within the context of today's immigrant families. For those who came hoping to hear an easy solution "to fix" the challenges our community faces, they may have left disappointed. These are layered and complex issues deeply ingrained into each of us like a hot ash on a raw piece of wood, but through opportunities shared at the table perhaps a better way can be found than the divisiveness that mars our country.

On Thursday two area congregations joined members of the mission in leading a lunch at a local farm. Under the shade of Oak trees draped in Spanish Moss, we broke bread with over 70 farmworkers. Our hearts swelled

whose own home seems uncertain.



For most of these years I have made my way to the mission by way of Moccasin Wallow Road. Like many of the minor roadways in Florida, Moccasin Wallow is a tiny stretch of road connecting Route 41 with U.S. Highway 301. Over the years I have watched as more and more of the farms that lined this little roadway have given way to housing developments. Where once stood groves of Oranges and workers picking cabbage, bulldozers and the hum of heavy construction now fill the air. Watching these fields plowed under has made me a little misty and a bit nostalgic. Our community is changing, some would argue for the better, but I don't know – what happens to the farmworker when there are no more crops to pick?

with invitations to return again soon. It was a small offering on our part for their thankless labor.

Sunday members of our community traveled to Tampa to celebrate world communion with the members of Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church. We gathered together as Christians have done for generations before us -- through adversity and prosperity, life happens at the table. We at Beth-El continue to listen and pray on how we may support our community through these challenging days. Our work is still here, but our focus is evolving.

Last summer while visiting the General Assembly in Scotland, the moderator of the assembly, the Rev. Colin Sinclair offered these words: "We long for the world to know the *reality* of Jesus Christ." Yet, we are the one's Christ has called to reflect his holiness.

Is it any wonder that on that last night with his friends, Jesus would gather them at the table to break bread, to laugh and inwardly cry, for the new life he continues to offer us at the table.

Dios le bendiga,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy".

Rev. Kathleen (Kathy) Dain  
Executive Director







## ***Being Refreshed by the Love of Christ***

*So that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. Romans 15:32*



This verse from Romans reminds me of the joy so many of our dedicated volunteers bring to Beth-El. Not only do we receive joy from each other as we serve the Kingdom of God, but we are refreshed from the love and interaction of the people of the community.

One of many examples of this is the small but mighty team taking on the remodeling of the thrift store. Led by Dean Vittetoe our volunteers and staff are working at an incredible pace. Very soon the *Tiendita* will be open for business with a fresh, new look. Our thrift store not only provides items for those in our community, but it also is a means to help those in need through our outreach program. Thank you Team *Tiendita* for all you are doing!



Would you like to share joy? Our students in our Step Up for Success program who are in school would benefit greatly from your love and encouragement. We are seeking volunteers this Christmas season to write notes, pray, and/or send gift cards to our students. In return, they will be *refreshed in your company*.

Please contact MaryEllen at [outreach@beth-el.org](mailto:outreach@beth-el.org) for more information.

Bendiciones,

*Mary Ellen*

MaryEllen Welton Barragan  
Community Outreach Manager

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# Volunteers of the Month

Our featured volunteers this month are Nidia and Peter Lugo, a brother and sister team, originally from Puerto Rico. After retirement, Nidia and her husband moved to Ruskin and soon after, her brother Peter and his family moved to the same neighborhood. Once settled into her new community, Nidia started volunteering in the food pantry at Beth-El Mission. You guessed it! Nidia then recruited her brother to volunteer at the food pantry, also. Together, this dedicated team has a combined total of nearly 17 years of service at the Beth-El Mission Food Pantry.



To learn more about volunteering, please email MaryEllen at [outreach@beth-el.org](mailto:outreach@beth-el.org).









Thanks to Bayshore Presbyterian and Trinity Lutheran for hosting our first lunch at the farm. To learn more on how you can support this ministry, please email MaryEllen at [outreach@beth-el.org](mailto:outreach@beth-el.org)

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## ***Volunteer Opportunities***



*Thanks to all of our faithful volunteers that support our community.*

Beth-El has a number of opportunities for volunteers who 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.**
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Many thanks to the Tampa Bay Oratory for sharing the gift of music and fellowship with the people of Beth-El. To hear a portion of the event click on the photo above.

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# ***Immediate Needs***

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

- **Deodorant**
- **New Socks**
- **Hats (baseball style)**
- **Bandanas**
- **Men's Pants Sizes 30-36**
- **Toothpaste**
- **Disposable Razors**
- **Feminine Products**
- **New Men's & Women's Underwear - All Sizes**
- **Adult Diapers**
- **Adult Hoodies**
- **Baby Wipes**
- **Insect Repellent**
- **Sunblock**
- **Adult Long Sleeve Button Up Shirts**
- **Bar Soap**
- **Dental Floss**



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

- ☐ Step Up for Success Mentor
- ☐ Food Pantry
- ☐ Lead VBS
- ☐ Organize a Workgroup
- ☐ Organize a Food Drive
- ☐ Organize a Clothing Drive

I would like to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Summer Camp Scholarships
- ☐ Back to School Program
- ☐ VBS Supplies
- ☐ Education Scholarships
- ☐ Dental Clinic
- ☐ Food Pantry
- ☐ Mission's Greatest Need



## *Wear your Support*

*Proceeds from our Beth-El T-Shirt Sales  
will Support The Step Up for Success  
Scholarship Fund.*

T-Shirts are \$20 each



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**A Printable Copy of this Newsletter is Available on our  
Website at: [www.beth-el.org](http://www.beth-el.org) or by emailing us at:  
[info@beth-el.org](mailto:info@beth-el.org)**



Gift cards are a wonderful way to help support the Beth-El community. The cards can be used in a variety of ways including for purchases of clothing, food or fuel. To learn more, please contact Kathy at [Director@beth-el.org](mailto:Director@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

**Our mailing address is:**

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Email: [info@beth-el.org](mailto:info@beth-el.org)

Web: [www.beth-el.org](http://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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Rev. Tamara Leonard Lara, Pastor

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