



When Someone is Chasing You ~

You Run



Summer was a wonderful time when I was a child. When we kids weren't swimming in the waters of Lake Leelanau, we would entertain ourselves with exploring the hills around our cottage, discovering Petoskey stones or a stone arrowhead left over from the original tenants of our land. We played games, or made up games of our own.

One such game was a derivation of the game, "Tag". The hitch with our version was that if you were caught, you had to drink a pitcher of water. I can no longer remember whether or not the person tagged became, "it" or if we continued to run. All I can remember is how much slower I ran after drinking all that water! It slowed

you down, making it much easier to be caught again.

One of my recent responsibilities has been working with the Beth-El youth group while the mission searches for a pastor to begin a new young adult ministry. Working with these teens has become a mission of my heart. I have been tasked with helping them learn about God, but through them I am learning so much more.

There has been a great deal of anxiety in our community lately with the recent changes to the immigration law. It isn't that all farmworkers are undocumented, but the knowledge of someone who is without papers sometimes falls right down family lines. I have teens worried that they might come home from school and find one of their parents has been taken away, or parents asking help with documents to insure their kids will be safe "*just in case*". The most heart rendering moment was when one of my 14-year old's told of her first-hand experience witnessing a raid when she was a little girl. She recalled sitting on the bus and watching children and adults run. One of her classmates, along with her parents were taken that day.

Both staff members, Javier and Rosalva, can recall similar incidents growing up in farmworking families. Javier remembers a raid as a teen when everyone started running. He started running, too, even though he is a U.S. citizen. Yet, he joked, “when someone is chasing you: *you run!*”

Rosalva recalls being chased by someone in a big truck while living down in Miami. She and her classmates hid until they found a police officer, but Rosalva notes, “I am not too sure I would go up to an officer today with everything that’s going on. Both Javier and Rosalva are U.S. citizens. Javier was born in Brownsville, Texas, while Rosalva and her family gained amnesty during President Reagan’s administration.



To be clear, the current changes to immigration laws are beyond the scope of our mission, however, they are not beyond our compassion. For our farmworking families these latest changes are like drinking one more pitcher of water in this reality version of “*Tag.*” It slows you down, burdening your heart and mind.



Since its inception in 1976, Beth-El Farmworker Ministry has strived to be a nurturing and supporting guardian to the families of farmworkers. We meet men and women in crisis without adequate resources to provide for their families; we promote transformation through education so future generations may explore opportunities beyond the farmlands. And we do the best we can to position our community with the resources they need whether it is healthcare, social, or legal services. Our mission statement is clear: to support farmworkers and our neighbors in need through hunger relief, education, health care, and spiritual growth.

Our food pantry is presently supporting up to 700 families a week through the USDA temporary emergency food assistance program, donations, and other mission partners. Our scholarships are helping students pursue a college education or vocation through a local trade school, and our mission partners work with us to help provide the basic necessities for healthcare. But it is in the mission's call for Spiritual Growth that we find God prodding us forward. In addition to the mission's current worship services on Sunday and Tuesday evenings led by pastor Walter Chuquimia, plans are underway to begin a new young adult ministry to help those in our community navigate the complexities of life within two cultures grounded in the assurance that God in Christ walks with us.



It seems fitting that in our liturgical calendar the Transfiguration of Christ immediately precedes Lent. It is that moment in the gospel when Peter, James and John catch a glimpse of God's glory within the man whom they have walked beside for several years. It was not that God's glory had not been present in Christ earlier, simply it was just at this opportunity that God chose to let that light shine before the darkened days to Calvary. As we again follow that road this Lenten season, may we find moments in our congregations, our workplace, and within our families for a time of Holy conversations. How is God leading us through these days? What legacy will we leave behind for

our children?

We have no idea how many of those seeking assistance at Beth-El may be personally affected by the recent changes to deporting undocumented immigrants. When someone is hungry, we don't ask for documents, we give them food. However, it is estimated by some that given the current backlog for those seeking family visas, and the prospect of 11.5 million more deportations, that it could take up to 20 years to reunite families whose citizenship lies between two nations. There is also no way of knowing how these changes will affect the 200,000 farmworkers who annually travel to Florida to pick our crops.

What I personally pray for, though, is the day when a 14-year old child doesn't have to worry that their mom and dad will still be waiting for them when they return from school.

*May the peace of Christ go with you
Que la paz de Cristo vaya con ustedes,*

Kathy

Rev. Kathleen Dain
Executive Director

Editor's Note: If you are interested in holding a Holy conversation in your congregation or workplace and would like Kathy to help facilitate, please contact her at Kathy@beth-el.org.



“Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6:16

A new worshipping experience for young adults. Coming soon to
Beth-El Farmworker Ministry.

Appears to be a Dead End

In the summer of 1994, to complete the requirements for ordination of The Grand Canyon Presbytery, Arizona, I was asked to do an internship in Wild Rose, Wisconsin. Hundreds of farmworkers: men, women and children arrived for the harvesting of watermelon and cucumbers (pepinos in Spanish). On Sunday mornings, some of them attended worship service. In the afternoons you would see them around the soccer ball field having a wonderful family time. On one occasion, two teams were about to play, but, it was noticeable that the players of the team with white shirts were taller than the other team.

A group of younger Mexicans had challenged a Central American team that had mostly young men from Guatemala and Honduras, clearly descendants of the Great Mayan Empire. The first half ended 4 to 1 in favor of the Mexican team. The second half started, it was hard to tell what happened at half time. Not only did the central Americans play with a new attitude, the people around the soccer field also had decided to make sure the underdog team had a chance to do better. People began to chant these famous words of hope. "Si Se Puede, Si Se Puede, Si, Si Puede!"



Easter and its aftermath are a good lesson in how to rise from what appears to be a dead end. Jesus and the early disciples are an incredible reminder that you can experience a situation of utter despair and turn it into something transformative. Particularly after January 20th, farm workers are challenged to put that lesson into practice. The absence of clarity on the directives coming from the federal government concerning immigration is causing anxiety to people that otherwise are committed to get up early in the morning, go out, work, hoping to return home at the end of the day. "Si se puede." are the words to utter in the ears of farmworkers, and "Si se puede" are also the words for rallying the cry for farm worker justice. It helps to know a little Spanish to truly understand why the phrase is so powerful. Usually, "sí se puede" is translated into English as "yes, we can." But in Spanish, there is an additional nuance.

Now, more than ever, we need to inspire action and a belief in the common good. **But we need you.** In Spanish, the word "puede" comes from "poder," which serves as both a verb and a noun. The noun means "power." "Puede" is power in action. For the farm worker, the phrase "Si se puede" speaks to situations of injustice and says, "We have the power to rise." The growers and government may have had power, but the message of Easter for farm workers is that they have power, too.



In the soccer field of Wild Rose, Wisconsin, a beautiful thing happened, contrary to all predictions, the Mayan team won over the Aztecs. But, they hadn't seen themselves as winners or losers, they were farm workers.

Holy Week is a time for spiritual reflection and renewal. What better way to celebrate our faith and tradition than spending time with our family and enjoying our delicious

gastronomic roots at the table? Here at Beth-El we will celebrate Easter with a sunrise service (outside by the gazebo). A member of the worshiping community with a Mexican heritage has invited my family and I to visit them after service for lunch. I think we will have a capirotada (a Mexican bread pudding) for desert. Friends it is my hope that you also will have a blessed Easter celebration.

OREMOS: Hear the plight of your people in the fields O Great Sower of seeds, Pruner of vines, Harvester of justice. Listen to their voices cry out for relief, cry out for opportunity, cry out for respect. And answer, we pray. Give us courage to stand with farm workers in their quest for self-determination. Give us the audacity to proclaim to those in powerful places like business and politics and law enforcement that we must listen to farm workers. Give us boldness to speak to our friends and our families and our faith communities that farm workers deserve better. Amen.

The Rev. Walter Chuquimia Pastor



Spending a week at summer camp can be a life changing experience for the child of a farmworker... Every year the mission spends about \$17,000 to send 40 to 50 children and teens to Cedarkirk, but we need your support.

Won't you sponsor a child to Cedarkirk this summer?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Accept my Donation to send a child to camp. \$ _____

Please use my donation where most needed. \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Beth-El Farmworker Ministry - PO Box 860 Wimauma FL 33598.



STEP UP for SUCCESS



The **Step Up for Success Program** has successfully enrolled 29 individuals! We have a hard working and dedicated group of people excited about opportunities available in our area and what the future may hold for them. Many of our program participants are farmworkers and obtaining employment at a restaurant, assisted living community or hotel means they'll have a reliable income. They will no longer have the stress about rainy/stormy days that would affect their paycheck. We have two desktop computers available for our Wimauma residents and there has been a high flow of folks working on resumes, employment searches, and online applications.

To learn more about the **Step Up for Success** program and how you can volunteer or participate, contact **Veronica Barrios-Monroy (Outreach Resource Coordinator)** by phone at 813-633-1548 ext.224 or by email at Veronica@beth-el.org.



Beth-El Moments



On Tuesdays we always have extra fun, pictured on the left: visitors from Hope United Presbyterian Church. On the Right: Javier and Kathy warmly welcoming our community to the Cena Comunitaria held on Valentine's Day.



On the left: Evan Jorn, former Executive Director of Beth-El Mission next to Javier paid a visit to Beth-el and was impressed with all the good changes that have occurred over the years. On the right: A community member, is happy that there are veterinarian services being offered at our campus this season. Many thanks to Dr. Barry Kellogg for sharing his veterinarian ministry to the community of Beth-El.



Immediate Needs

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

- **Deodorant: men/women**
- **Powdered milk (Enfamil)**
- **Gently used tennis shoes**
- **Toothpaste & Toothbrushes**
- **\$25 Wal-Mart Gift cards**
- **Sunscreen**
- **New/Used baseball style cap**
- **Easter Sunday will be here soon. Would you consider donating an Easter Basket for members of our community.**

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

- Community Dinner
- Food Pantry
- Lead VBS
- Organize a Workgroup
- Organize a Food Drive
- Organize a Clothing Drive



Hello Friends, as you may know we have been serving approximately 60-80 men, women and children through our Community Dinner on the second Tuesday of every month. There is still no group signed up for the month of March. If you are interested in sponsoring the Community Dinner for March through your church group or organization, please contact Javier or Sheila at (813) 633-1548 for more details.

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

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.



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

Beth-El
Farmworker Ministry, Inc.

Fueled by Volunteers and Your Faithful Prayers and Support

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Web: www.beth-el.org



Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is open Monday through Thursday from 8a.m. to 5p.m., or by special appointment.

We are closed from noon until 1p.m. for lunch.



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