



# THE CHIMES

## IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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### *“Revlections”*

April 2019

This is continuing to be a challenging season for me. Normally, I would have a dining room table loaded down with seeds, plant lights, potting soil, and a variety of heirloom seed catalogs. So far, my seed collection is still hiding somewhere in a pile of unpacked boxes. My new backyard needs a landscaper to do some heavy lifting before I can begin to start a new garden for the next butterfly garden and bird habitat. For me, the challenge of Easter begins in dirt and never really ends.

Ash Wednesday began by reminding us that we're finite, carbon-based beings, who at some point in some way, face the finality of death to be returned to the place where all of human life first began – in the created soil shaped by God's fingers. The Season of Lent kept the message of human frailty and vulnerability in our faces. Then, the powers of evil used the first Holy Week to hammer the life out of Jesus and silence his voice forever.

God refused to allow those powers to use death as the ultimate tool of human destruction. Stones and dirt couldn't contain God's dream that had been encased in the very bones of Jesus! The dirt of the Earth could only hold him for three days. And new life for all of humankind has been emerging ever since. We symbolize the Resurrection with every hole we dig for every bulb we plant. Months later, if the critters leave them alone and the weather cooperates, we get surprised with daffodils, lilies, tulips, and grape hyacinths.

To me, the truth of Easter isn't very hard to see, but it's harder to live out. We need the power of Mother Nature/God to take the life contained by seeds and bulbs and kick start them into whatever they're created to be. Without the dirt, without temporary death, ultimate life gets stuck in the ground with no way out. We just have to decide if we want it or not. So, how do you want to use the life that is you? Do you want to stay inert in your dirt or plant newness into the world around you?

The current state of my neglected and abused yard is temporary. In time, the endless white rocks will become drainage tools and the horrible black plastic will be removed. Organic restoring top soil, peat moss, rescued earthworms, mulch, seeds and plants will gradually create a new bird sanctuary and a haven for pollinators! I love to live, play and work in dirt and meet God at the ground level of my own life.

*continued*

My house may still look like Lent for some more months, but my heart is already living in the promise of Easter. So, I invite you to face whatever dirt that may be preventing newness of life from reaching into the deepest part of you and allow more of God's joyful Spirit to spark growth. You really can bloom where you're planted! Welcome to the Easter Garden!

Peace and mulch...

Rev Bev

## Ximena's Journey

By [Cara McKinney](#) on March 12, 2019

from: [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org)

How many of you were the first person in your family to go to college? Or maybe your older sibling or a parent was the first person in your family to go to college. Do you remember what that process was like? How did you prepare? Did you choose a school close to home? Did you have to work while in school?

Now imagine you are the 3rd daughter in a family of six children. Neither of your parents even finished high school. Your parents' native language was not what was taught in school. Your older sister wanted to go to college, but your parents didn't allow it because she needed to stay home to help in the family store and take care of the younger siblings. This is Ximena's story.

In Mexico, instead of taking the ACT or the SAT, students take a specific test for every university they are interested in attending. If they don't get high enough grades on any of the tests, they aren't accepted and must wait another year to try again. Ximena has been coming to Melel since she was 11 years old. Her older sisters participated in our weekend workshops and, as many younger siblings do, she started coming along with her sisters to learn and to make friends. My first summer in Mexico, Ximena had just finished high school and was excited about going to college, but she didn't get into any of the universities to which she applied. Teary-eyed, she came to Melel looking for guidance.

She was met with emotional support and a slew of ideas. One of my coworkers, an educator, told her about the university he attended in northern Mexico that didn't have an entrance exam. He helped her with the application and the entrance requirements and low and behold, she was accepted! Next, my coworkers helped her find and apply for four separate scholarships that would pay her tuition, room and board, transportation to and from school, and give her a monthly living stipend. Coming from a family with limited resources she would not have been able to even consider the university if she had just received three of the four scholarships. Luckily, she was awarded all four scholarships. Next came what would turn out to be the second-hardest part of Ximena's journey: convincing her parents that she could go. This school is a 40-hour bus ride north and Ximena hadn't even traveled outside of Chiapas before, let alone traveled anywhere by herself. With help from the same educator, Ximena's parents were convinced. Lastly, the hardest part: convincing herself. Two weeks before classes were set to begin, she still hadn't decided if she was going or not.



Ximena came to Melel with her bus ticket in hand, unsure if traveling so far away for school was a good idea. She made her rounds talking to all the educators at Melel, asking each one for their opinion and advice. Toward the end of the day, she asked to speak to me. I'd only been at Melel for three months, why did she want to speak to me? She barely knew me, we hadn't yet had time to develop a relationship, and my Spanish accent was still pretty awful. I am lucky in that both my parents, as well as my sister and brother-in-law have advanced degrees. What advice could I possibly have to offer a first-generation college student from a low-income family in southern Mexico? What did we have in common? I wasn't worried about talking to her, per se, but I was worried about having the words and advice that she needed to hear. Ximena looked at me with tears in her eyes and asked what it is like to live far from home and family. Ah-hah, *of course*, that's where we can connect. So, I told her the truth: it would be hard and sometimes she would miss her family and her home so much it hurt, but that it would be one of the most exciting and most fruitful things she does in life. She would learn independence and make new friends, learn to appreciate another part of her country, learn to travel (so that hopefully someday she could travel to other countries!), and she would come home stronger than ever. Most importantly, I assured her, she could always return home.

Two weeks later, Ximena was on a northbound bus to start her first semester of college.

But how incredible is it that this young, 18-year-old girl could see our commonalities when I couldn't? Ximena taught me that we are all much more similar than we are different.

Without the years of support and encouragement from Melel, I am positive that she would not have had the courage to leave home and go so far away in search of her dreams.

So, what does it take to break the cycles of poverty? It takes one courageous 18-year-old girl embarking on a journey that includes three 15-hour bus rides through twelve states, two time zones, and 60 degrees of air temperature change to a university in northern Mexico. It takes years of support and mentorship from strong women. It takes dedicated educators who are willing to take phone calls at midnight to help find plane tickets, as well as help researching scholarships. It takes hours of advice about living in a new place and dealing with homesickness. It takes a community of encouragement and well wishes and something like one hundred hugs goodbye.

*This* is the life-changing work Melel Xojobal does.

So, what does the Lord require of us? But to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8), allowing ourselves to see more of what we have in common and less of what makes us different.

*Cara McKinney serves with Melel Xojobal in Mexico. Her appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund. Our Church's Wider Mission. WOC. OGHS. and your [special gifts](#).*

### April Birthdays

05 – Kineta Rotan

09 – Jim Getz

12 – Rana Froman

12 – Beverly Simpson

13 – Elizabeth Riggins Miller

19 – Ed Lanehart

21 – Alayna Pfefferkorn

30 – Hayden Hendrix



## Upcoming Events

**Spanish Class with Alfredo Olivas** – Thursday, May 2 from 4:00 to 5:30 in the conference room

**First Church Picnic of 2019** – Saturday, May 4 at 5:00 at the Dunham's. Bring a dish to share and your drink of choice. Meat will be provided. 4056 Pebble Branch Rd, Ellicott City 410-750-2147

**Consistory** – May 19

**Mother's Day** – May 12

**Memorial Day** – May 27



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### *Lectionary Readings*

(Day-Date; First Reading; Psalm; Second Reading; Gospel)

#### **Fifth Sunday in Lent** – April 7, 2019

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

#### **Palm / Passion Sunday** – April 14, 2019

Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11

#### **Maundy Thursday** – April 18, 2019

Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

#### **Good Friday** – April 19, 2019

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18:1-19:42

#### **Easter Sunday** – April 21, 2019

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18

#### **Second Sunday of Easter** – April 28, 2019

Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 150; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

## Prayer Concerns

### PLEASE REMEMBER OUR HOME-BOUND MEMBERS:

#### PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE CHURCH FAMILY:

Joyce Stanton, maintenance medication; Jill, Bell's Palsy.

#### PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY:

June Lewis (Rev Bev's mom); Rev. Casey Cain, heart condition; Bryan Holley's brother and extended family; Rev. Maeba Jonas' mother, Susan, cancer recurrence and chemotherapy; Sue and Steve DiPaula's extended family; Central Atlantic Conference; residents and staff of Earl's Place; Kim Turner, treatment for brain cancer.

#### PRAYER CONCERNS IN OUR REGION:

Baltimore City government; Baltimore gun violence; all undocumented residents; refugee families in Baltimore County; safety of law enforcement and first responders.

#### NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PRAYER CONCERNS:

Sri Lanka; Storm victims; Notre Dame Cathedral and people of France; Venezuela, Britain; Kenya; Syria; Reunification of immigrant and refugee kids with their families; Puerto Rico; all UCC disaster relief projects; prayers for our country; families fearful of deportation; all U.S. military deployed and stateside; refugees seeking safety and compassionate care; refugees seeking safety and compassionate care.