

Have you been contemplating what it would be like to live in an intentional Catholic community on a mountaintop in WV? **APPLY TO BE A CARETAKER!**

<http://bethlehemfarm.net/bf-community/become-a-caretaker>

## Save the Date!

our 15th Anniversary Reunion Celebration has been **POSTPONED** to Labor Day Weekend 2021

We hope you can come celebrate with us next year!

## A Change of Plans

By Theresa, Volunteer

For spring break, I had planned all year to go to Calcutta, India, to serve the poor with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity. About 18 hours before we were supposed to board the plane, our trip was canceled. Luckily, Benedictine College is truly amazing and wanted to find an alternative missionary experience for us. Less than 24 hours later, we found out that we would be going to West Virginia to serve the poor in Appalachia through a mission called Bethlehem Farm. Through this experience of disappointment and confusion, I learned so much about what it means to surrender. I thought that choosing to go to Calcutta was such a huge act of surrender and sacrifice, but in reality, the biggest act of surrender and sacrifice was letting go of my attachment to Calcutta. As I wrestled with this change, it became so clear that God never intended for me to go to Calcutta this spring. He was always planning for me to

go to West Virginia, even though it felt like a dramatic change of plans. We clung to St. Teresa of Calcutta's famous saying:

**"You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have eyes to see. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are unwanted, unloved, uncared for, just rejected by society — completely forgotten, completely left alone."**

As a team, we decided to surrender all of our plans and expectations to completely enter into whatever the Lord had in store for us in West Virginia. At Bethlehem Farm, we were joined by students from Notre Dame and Avila University and we dove headfirst into the four cornerstones of the Farm: prayer, simplicity, service, and community. We lived out prayer by gathering every morning and evening to pray together, as well as having Mass and adoration. Simplicity was the hardest to adjust to, as we had to turn off our phones, take off watches, only shower twice during the week (bucket showers!), and partake in electricity fasts. Service was lived out through the Farm's home repair program, which involved going with a crew to a

home in the community to provide services such as painting, working on the roof, and fixing foundations. I learned so many new skills! Lastly, the cornerstone of community was my favorite. I grew so close to my crew members, as well as the other students who were on the trip!



Theresa (in the plaid shirt) and her team from Benedictine College

While on the Farm, I reflected a lot about how God pours Himself out to us every single day in creation, but so often we fail to recognize Him. We treat the earth as if it is our footstool rather than a gift from the Creator. Similarly, I can pour myself out to others in friendship or in service, but sometimes I won't be received. God models to us that we should pour ourselves out in love every single day. The more I serve others, the more I realize that in giving of myself I discover my identity. And I can find strength and trust in the fact that the sun rises every morning and the stars come out every night. And I think this experience prepared my heart for the craziness, uncertainty, and fear of the world that we were thrown back into. Life should be less complicated than we sometimes make it. God is good, and He will always provide.

As bummed as I was that I didn't get to go to India, it is so clear that this is what the Lord willed for me all along.

- Postage Stamps
  - AA & AAA Batteries
  - Paint Brushes
  - Luci LED Solar Lanterns
  - Canning Lids
  - One-piece Rubber Spatula Scrapers
  - 18-volt drills
- Check out our online tool registry... [bethlehemfarm.net/donations/wish-list](http://bethlehemfarm.net/donations/wish-list)

WISH LIST



## Spring at the Farm

By Miriam, Bethlehem Farm Community Member

At the Farm, springtime means more than new life. It means renewed spirit. Every year, new people come, more plants grow, and more friendships are established. I am lucky to live here in this place of growth and life.

Every year, groups drive in to be rewarded with a happy chorus of "Welcome Home." Each spring is the start of a new year. While picking dandelions, violets, daffodils, lilacs, or any number of different flowers, I remember how lucky I am.

Every season has its highs and lows: Summer with its occasional heat and short droughts; fall with its crisp air, moderate temperatures, and falling colored leaves; winter with its snow drifts, cold nights, frost, and warm fires. But spring, with its buds, flowers, greenery and varying temperatures, is, to me, the most exciting season of all. For me, spring is a time of loose fun, new birth, greenery, happiness, and love.



## God's Relentless Love at Bethlehem Farm University

By Pat, Summer Servant

The past few weeks at the Farm have been a transition just as the entire world has been transitioning to a new "normal" amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. I was able to start my Summer Servant-ship early, and have been taking online classes while living in the Bethlehem Farm community...and sneaking in chores, garage prep, and gym class with the kids when possible. Just last week we were able to take out the old pasture fence, reverently remove Bathtub Mary (she will find a new home soon), and continue preparations for the maintenance garage.

Some positives of my now virtual school schedule include dedicated community prayer in the mornings and community meals in the evening. I continually reflect on the changes brought about by a pandemic and how they find their place in the context of intentional community. I have been able to occupy myself with work,

maintain a certain amount of structure, and rely more heavily on Caretakers for support. Being faced with distancing and quarantine has allowed me to see even more clearly the importance of a community rallying around its members to provide support and balance.

My "routine" has been disrupted, but I have been in constant awe of God's relentless in extending that resilient, tender community to those who continue to feel isolated and lonely. I have found I often

experience God through nature, work, and other people. Despite the lessened physical interaction with people, I continue to witness God's ability to penetrate the hearts of His people even if they cannot congregate in person. It brings not only a reminder of the importance of cherishing the moments we have together but also that our connection with each other goes beyond our physical presence. I attribute this continuation of growth to the unwavering, relentless love of God residing in all people and shining through in the thoughtful, compassionate responses to this time of crisis. I continue to discover how my relationships flourish in spirit even removed from physical presence and I receive consolation knowing pandemics, illness, and separation cannot restrain the love and fullness of God manifested in His beloved creation.



## Quiche

One recipe per 9 x 13" pan of quiche

1. Prepare and pre-bake crusts. Then prepare egg custard base and set aside for a moment.
2. Prepare selected filling and pour into crust.
3. Pour egg custard base over the top of all of it and bake as directed below.

### Potato Crust:

- 5 cups uncooked, coarsely grated potatoes
- ¼ cup oil

Mix together. Press into the 9 x 13 pan. Bake in preheated 425F oven until just starting to brown, about 15 minutes.

### Egg Custard Base:

- 6 eggs
- 2 c. milk
- 2 c. shredded cheese
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper

Whisk eggs and milk together. Add cheese, salt, and pepper and mix thoroughly. Set aside to pour on top of crust and filling before baking.

### Filling Options (choose one per 9 x 13 pan)

#### Taco:

- 2-3 cups cooked black beans
- 1 cup onion, chopped and sautéed
- 1 cup green peppers, chopped and sautéed
- ½ cup taco seasoning
- 1 cup corn

#### Broccoli-Spinach:

- 2 cups chopped broccoli
- 2 cups onion, chopped and sautéed
- 3 cups spinach or cooking greens, chopped
- 2 tsp garlic powder OR 4 minced cloves garlic
- 1 cup cooked bacon or sausage, crumbled

#### Asparagus:

- 3 cups asparagus, cooked and chopped
- 1 cup onion, chopped and sautéed
- 2 tsp dried rosemary
- ½ cup fresh dill, chopped, OR 1 TB dried dill
- 1 cup cooked bacon or sausage, crumbled

#### Italian:

- 2 cups diced tomatoes, canned or fresh
- 2 cups onion, chopped and sautéed
- 8 cloves garlic, chopped and sautéed
- 2 TB each dried oregano and dried basil
- 1 lb Italian sausage, chopped and cooked
- 3 cups spinach or cooking greens, chopped

#### Sausage:

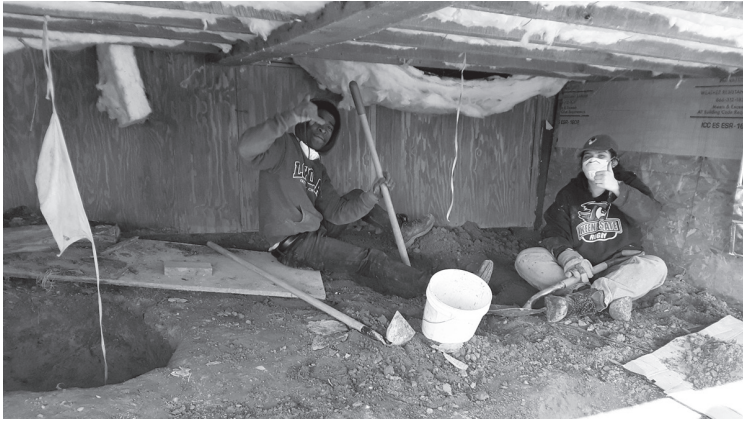
- 1 lb Italian sausage, chopped and cooked
- 2 cups onion, chopped and sautéed
- 8 cloves garlic, chopped and sautéed
- 1 TB steak seasoning

#### Create your own filling:

- 1 lb meat, 3 cups veggies, seasoning

## Our Work With the Community

By Gemma, Project Assistant



Our ambitions to carry three home repair sites in March led not only to great work done but also to many relationships formed. I led crews to two sites in two days, going to Paul's one day to repair his trailer's underpinning and then to Paige and Courtney's to seal their leaky roof. Paige and Courtney were excited to be part of the process and to learn how to fix their roof in the future.

Eric led farm crews on our own farm and at Farmer Rhonda's, as she continues construction on a high tunnel that will increase local food production. Volunteers also got to witness the miracle of several goat births while there! Our neighbor Anne welcomed crews who spent time learning and working at her organic farm. Her grace inspired everyone who spent time with her. We are incredibly lucky to have her as our neighbor!

Joseph led crews to Bonnie's, where fixing her leaks started with a foundation repair. While pouring new concrete footers, volunteers got to experience Bonnie's hospitality and wisdom and got to know four generations of her tight-knit family. The next project will be replacing the roof to take care of the leaks. As one crew put it in their review of the day, "Bonnie's house was lovely 'cause she has a great soul—We didn't want to leave today!"

Tori employed her attention to detail to lead volunteers in painting Leota's house. They boosted curb appeal while helping weatherize the house, and also enjoyed Leota's storytelling. Bethlehem Farmers have been at Leota's many times over the years and we have been lucky to rekindle the relationship.

Raine and I built relationships (and demolished porches) with Ann and her daughters April and DeDe. Volunteers also helped us prepare for roof replacement. Although our plans changed for the third week in March, Caretakers pulled together and finished the structural repairs to the roof and put down platinum paper to make the house watertight. Meanwhile, Ann, April, and DeDe are working to fix up the interior of the house to make Ann more comfortable. We then installed metal roofing and completed the front porch. Now we are beginning to work on the back porch.

The governor's stay-at-home order has caused us to exercise heightened caution with our home repair program, and we have been limiting our contact with neighbors and homeowners in the interest of safety. However, we are still engaging in service with the community with enhanced safety protocols and we are excited to get back to full speed as soon as possible.



## Finding a Home at Bethlehem Farm

By Molly, Caretaker

On a Friday in June of 2015, my first week at the farm as a high school volunteer, I wrote in my journal that while leaving was an important part of my journey, I was reluctant to do so because I felt that "the Farm is my home." Knowing that I'd be back, I returned to my familial home in Narberth, Pennsylvania, to finish my senior year at Merion Mercy Academy. I came back to Bethlehem Farm as a Summer Servant in 2017, 2018, and 2019, taking delight in planting onions and finding joy dancing in the rain.

I continued my education at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland, majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Education and Psychology. As I prayed for post-grad guidance in anticipation of my 2020 graduation, I felt God whisper "go home." He was not calling me to move back to Pennsylvania, but to return to

Bethlehem Farm as a Caretaker. As I embrace this new relationship to the Farm, I am eager to co-create in the garden, participate in community renewal, respond to Appalachia's beauty through art, and embrace community living. Most of all, though, I am excited to welcome others home.

## Thank You!

Friend-of-the-Farm  
Mary Kay Spencer  
made face masks for  
the Bethlehem Farm  
community to help  
ensure we stay healthy  
when shopping and  
doing home repair. We  
are exceedingly grateful  
for her time and the  
delightful fabric patterns  
she chose for the masks.

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

Bethlehem Farm is a Catholic community in Appalachia that transforms lives through service with the local community and the teaching of sustainable practices. We invite volunteers to join us in living the Gospel cornerstones of community, prayer, service, and simplicity.

**OUR COMMUNITY:**

- Will Fair
- Colleen Fitts
- Eric Fitts
- Tori Llorens
- Raine Nimmer
- Steve Rassa
- Joseph Reilly
- Gemma Stanton
- Molly Sutter

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

- Brenna Davis
- John Hannagan
- Tricia Lally
- Scott McNelis
- Kathryn Moran
- Michael Newman
- Kat O’Loughlin
- Moira Reilly
- Jennifer Scott
- Tim Shovlin
- Rachelle Simon
- Craig Snyder
- Jake Teitgen
- Bill Thompson

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By our friends at Canfield & Tack

**Director’s Corner: Bethlehem Farm in the Covid-19 Era**

*By Eric, Director*

**“How are you doing in quarantine?” ... “Hope you are safe and healthy.”**

These were not the normal sign-on and sign-off of a card, letter, email, or phone call only a few months ago, but these phrases seem to have become commonplace now.

Many friends of the Farm have been asking lately, “how are you? And how can I help?”

**How are we?**

- The Farm is doing well. As of April 23rd, we had 20 groups, composed of 209 volunteers from 8 group weeks cancel in March-July so far, which is understandable and wise, but unfortunate. We are moving ahead with a modified quarantine-compliant Summer Servant program.
- There is some creative thinking needed about how we continue to transform lives and serve with the local community during physical distancing, but there is plenty of work available in the gardens, on program development, and in physically-distant low-income home repair, so no unemployment here (perhaps even more work than before, without help from groups).
- There is some fiscal concern about how long we can go without hosting groups, especially if donations dry up or foundations do not have as much to give due to stock downturns, but we have also planned well for such a challenge.
- The children are home, which has been both an added challenge and so much joy. They’ve been helping with Farm chores and we’ve been gathering interested children and Caretakers at 5pm for soccer practice and capture the flag.
- It is so beautiful here in spring! A loving Caretaker community surrounds us, we are celebrating Eucharist together, and taking care of neighbors, so it is hard to think of a better place to be quarantined.

**How can you help?**

- Pray for us.
- If you are interested in online volunteering opportunities, then please reach out (email [eric@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:eric@bethlehemfarm.net) or call 304-445-7143)—I have a menu of options for you to choose from.
- Please consider donating (send a check in the enclosed envelope or give online at [bethlehemfarm.net/give](http://bethlehemfarm.net/give)). Most of our costs are fixed, so when groups cancel and we lose fees, we are not simply able to send less money to the liability insurance company or tear our veggie seeds out of the ground, or stop paying a \$125/month living stipend to beginning Caretakers. Perhaps you have some unexpected stimulus funds that you wish to share.
- When travel restrictions loosen, please consider sending a service-retreat group our way or treating yourself to a week with us immersed in the Gospel cornerstones.



**Check us out online!**  
[www.bethlehemfarm.net](http://www.bethlehemfarm.net)

Questions or Comments regarding this publication, article submissions and photos can be sent to the editor at [caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net)