

# PEACEMAKING PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

April 2019

## Calendar Items

**Tuesday, April 2 - 6:30 p.m.,**

**Please join Georgians For  
Alternative to the Death  
Penalty and Juan Melendez**

for a viewing of a short film, *The Gathering*. Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church Parish Hall - Historic Church Building, 2855 Briarcliff Rd. NE Atlanta. Mr. Melendez was wrongfully convicted and spent 17 years on death row. He was exonerated and released in 2002.

**Friday, April 5, 6:45 pm,**

Shallowford Presbyterian Church  
- You Are Invited to a **Joining  
Hands for Justice Fundraising  
Event in Honor of Fahed Abu-  
Akel's 75th Birthday!** Featuring

Palestinian-American Spoken Word Poet, Remi Kanazi - Tickets: please choose an amount - \$75 to honor Fahed's birthday or donation of \$50 or \$60; \$25 for children and students - Cash, Checks or credit cards accepted. RSVP to Sarah Humphrey - [sarah.h.humphrey@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.h.humphrey@gmail.com) or text 770-722-5682

## A Visit to Stewart Detention Center

by Betti J. Steele (Peacemaking Partnership member)

*I was strangely calm as I left my belongings in Charlotte's car and walked toward Stewart Detention Center with only my ID and a card with the name of an immigrant detainee. Calm, until Charlotte (an El Refugio longtime volunteer) said this was where she got nervous. We walked through two sliding gates in the razor-topped wire fences, and then into a small waiting room where staff and visitors entered. Staff put their belongings on a scanner belt and walked in through a metal detector. Would we get to enter and talk to any detainees today? Last month this group from Atlanta was turned away due to a mumps quarantine.*

*But today, February 28, we were in luck. Five of us were processed in, and one remembered to ask for paper (a torn strip) and pencils (a stub). We went in along with two lady lawyers who brought stacks of paper in order to work with the immigrants. We were led to a concrete room with 5 glass window telephone visitation stations, and waited. Within maybe 20 minutes I met the young man I was to see: I'll call him Pablo, as his identity is confidential. He confirmed his name and the country he is from in South America. He was so young, handsome, and he was smiling which put me at ease! Using my imperfect but fluent Spanish I found out he was 20 years old and here for only 2 months; he was detained at the border in Texas. He is unmarried and has two brothers who had fled to Peru. He had gone to Peru also but then tried to visit his father and trouble caused him to flee to the US to seek asylum. He is able to call an uncle in Miami frequently, and so I was surprised to find that Pablo really had no complaints; no, he has not been ill. The food was okay, he said and he has talked to a lawyer. He can watch TV news. I asked about his faith - he is Catholic and is able to read the Bible in detention.*

## Calendar Items Continued

**Saturday, April 13 - 10 a.m. - Peacemaking Partnership monthly meeting,** North Decatur Presbyterian Church

**Sunday, April 28 - Hunger Walk, Register with the Presbytery - Carlos Moore - [ellos@aol.com](mailto:ellos@aol.com) or Rev. Phil Brown - [PhilBrown@slpres.org](mailto:PhilBrown@slpres.org)**

**Sunday, April 28, 3 PM - Atlanta Administration & Conference Center 2930 Flowers RD, S. Atlanta - JHJPI hosting Dr. Hani Khoury, Professor, Mercer University to speak about Project to help Disabled Palestinian Students - RSVP to Sarah Humphrey- [sarah.h.humphrey@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.h.humphrey@gmail.com)**

### March Book Report

Partnership member Doug Langdon reported on Walter Brueggemann's new book, ***Glad Obedience - Why and What We Sing***. The first part of the book discusses the Psalms and what they can teach us about the reasons that corporate song is part of the Christian tradition. The second part looks at 15 popular hymns and why they have captured our imagination.

### Thanks!

Thanks to the congregations of **Fairview** and **Morningside** for their contributions to the Peacemaking Fund at the Presbytery in February.

*He wants to learn to speak English. I told him that he is in a remote place and that there is a house called El Refugio where any family might stay if they came to visit him. His sweet smile reminded me that I had nothing to fear from him. As I prepared to say goodbye, I wondered if our paths would ever cross again. And so....I pray for Pablo and the 1700 other men incarcerated in this place.*

### About El Refugio

El Refugio provides visitation to immigrants at Stewart Detention Center in the remote town of Lumpkin, Georgia, as well as free lodging and meals to friends and family members visiting their loved ones. For eight years, El Refugio has operated out of a tiny rental house, offering bunk beds to families needing lodging in Lumpkin, which has no hotel, and few lodging options nearby. When the three-bedroom house was full, guests slept on futons and air mattresses, shared the house's lone bathroom and ate in shifts at the small dining room table.

In December 2018 *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* donated a six-bedroom house to El Refugio. The new house has 3,100 square feet, 20 beds, a renovated kitchen with new appliances, two bathrooms, and a custom dining room table that seats 20 people. Volunteers are especially excited about a new washer and dryer, as they no longer need to take bedding and towels to their homes in Atlanta for laundering. The new house is also in the center of the town.

In addition to providing housing for detained immigrants' families, the new house also welcomes volunteer lawyers and interpreters from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative, which provides free legal representation to immigrants held at Stewart and four other detention centers in Georgia and Louisiana.

The Peacemaking Partnership hears monthly reports about this ministry and has made donations through the Peacemaking Fund to El Refugio. If you or members of your congregation are interested in supporting or visiting El Refugio or the Stewart Detention Center, contact Joe Sandifer, [jwsandifer@aol.com](mailto:jwsandifer@aol.com)