



# Iglesia Nuevo Amanecer

Dear friends, prayer partners, and financial supporters of Nuevo Amanecer,

Greetings in 2017! I pray you have all had an opportunity to celebrate the birth of our Lord with glad hearts, to rest with loved ones, and to enter into the New Year with the hope and expectation that God will provide you with guidance and blessings in the year to come.

I cannot thank you enough for the many ways you have supported the ministry of Nuevo Amanecer (New Day). We are still a young ministry with great hope and many challenges. Your solidarity with our mission to shine Christ's light in East Boston gives us the courage and the perseverance to move forward with the agility and creativity that are required of any ministry seeking to heed the Spirit's call in 2017.

The new year gives me the opportunity to share with you some of the highlights of our ministry in 2016 as well as some of the goals we have for 2017 and our emerging understanding of who we are called to be so that you can pray for God's leadership for us as we continue in our life together.

## **Highlights from 2016:**

**We helped launch the East Boston Community Soup Kitchen.** The East Boston Community Soup Kitchen gathers weekly in the social hall at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church for food and fellowship. The leadership team includes people who are affiliated with Nuevo Amanecer as well as neighbors who were not previously connected with our church. There is a porous boundary between guests and volunteers in the soup kitchen and the gathered community represents a diverse cross-section of our neighborhood. We have also been thrilled with the support we experience from our neighbors in East Boston with generous businesses and individuals providing food and financing to make this a sustainable endeavor to show love to one another. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the soup kitchen is the spirit of the place. The atmosphere is warm, welcoming, and respectful. Some people in our neighborhood have described the soup kitchen as the place to be on Tuesdays. We are proud and honored to be a part of this life-giving project and excited to see where the Spirit leads us through this work.

**We started a new worship service.** After the first two months of the soup kitchen, some members of that community began asking for prayer. Our deacon, the Rev. Ema Rosero-Nordalm, and I invited several individuals up to the sanctuary to pray. We now have a simple Spanish language Community Prayer Service each week between the lunch and dinner services of the soup kitchen. We sing, pray, and study scripture. The prayers are earnest and the group is growing. While this Tuesday service has not replaced our weekend worship patterns, it is quickly becoming the center of our life together at Nuevo Amanecer.

**We are growing in intentional fellowship with Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.** Nuevo Amanecer is having strategic conversations with Our Saviour's Lutheran Church about our future as partners in ministry. Nuevo Amanecer used to worship on Saturdays, but we have now moved to Sundays in order to facilitate deepening relationships. We meet right after Our Saviours' coffee hour and encourage our people to participate in that important time of fellowship. Several Nuevo Amanecer members worship with Our Saviour's frequently and we are making plans for monthly bilingual services. Nuevo Amanecer and Our Saviour's are also working together to devise a long-term strategy for the building we share, to have a sustainable management structure in order for our building to continue providing space for fellowship and justice to be born.

### **Our Hopes for 2017:**

**We will grow in our discipleship and leadership development.** We are excited that in January 2017 we will offer a five-week course on calling as it is presented in the four gospels after our Tuesday afternoon worship service. Following that course, participants will be invited to continue working with us in one of two courses, an introduction to Christian practice and peer chaplaincy training. The goal of these courses is for participants to discern their spiritual gifts and leadership capacity as well as to identify how they will be ministers of the gospel, both in the church setting and in the wider community. This is a much-needed step as we seek to make disciples and to build a leadership structure that will bear fruit beyond our current capacity.

**We will form a friends group for our building.** With Our Saviour's we are exploring what it would look like to establish a faith-based community center to manage our building. Our Saviour's is discerning some capital improvements to make this a reality and together we are discussing potential models for management and who might serve in a leadership capacity as we move forward in our shared mission. We plan to form a friends group to explore these questions with us. This group has the potential to become a board of directors or a co-op in the event that we choose to move forward with a new organization. We have already identified potential partners in this endeavor and we are scheduling one-to-one conversations with them. We hope to see this group meeting by the summer of 2017 as we continue to grow in our understanding of the Church in this place.

**We will begin a monthly bilingual worship service.** While we have had occasional bilingual services, we have not yet settled into a pattern. Nuevo Amanecer members appreciate the bilingual services and are asking that we have them more frequently. Our Saviour's members are excited too. We will continue to celebrate major festivals together in both English and Spanish throughout the course of this year with a goal of establishing a pattern of monthly bilingual services before the year is over.

### **Creating spaces for encounter with Christ**

In Luke 17 we read the account of Jesus's encounter with 10 lepers. In the church, we tend to focus on the sequence of events that take place in that story: the lepers ask for Jesus to have mercy on them, Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priests, they are healed as they go, one of the men turns back and praises God while Jesus wonders why only one of the 10, a Samaritan (a foreigner), returns to praise God.

This approach to the story provides a wonderful context for thinking about faith, healing, and thanksgiving, but have you ever noticed the setting? The background for our story begins in verse 11

where we read that Jesus “was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee” on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus is neither in Samaria nor is he in Galilee. He is in no man’s land, a space between, a liminal space that does not fit within the established boundaries of society. The lepers, who are probably living in a leper colony, are representative of that space. Some are Jewish while others are Samaritan. Two groups of people who normally do not associate with one another are pushed to the margins where they find themselves in community because of their shared exclusion from polite society. It is in this space where they have a life-changing encounter with Jesus.

At Nuevo Amanecer, we are called to create such spaces for encounter. Many of the people we meet have been pushed to the margins of our world because of the color of their skin or the language they speak, because they do not read well or because they do not have stable housing. Some struggle with addictions. Others are merely lonely and in search of a surrogate family in a new country. All of us are equally in need of a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ that will show us who we are: God’s beloved children for whom Jesus sacrificed his life. All of us have God-given gifts to share with the world, even if the world cannot recognize them.

Staples of the “traditional” church in this country such as council meetings, pledge drives, and dressing in your Sunday best for worship can feel exclusionary to people who struggle with literacy and stable employment and who may have little or no experience in leadership or in congregational life. In our ministry we seek creative ways to move away from the expectations of a Christendom model of church that had congregations at the center of community and to make spaces on the margins where people might have an unexpected encounter with Jesus Christ, spaces such such as the table of the soup kitchen, a prayer for immigrants in Maverick square, or a community meeting in a church basement. Following those encounters, many will go away healed. Some will come back, praising God and giving thanks for their new life in Christ. It is on the witness of those who come back that God will continue to build the Church here.

In 2017, God is leading us to love our neighbors, to make disciples, and to articulate boldly a new vision of what the Church can be in this place. So please pray for us. Pray that God would give us vision and courage to follow the Spirit’s call. Pray that God will raise up leaders to help this community flourish. Most of all, pray that people will encounter the Lord here and have their lives transformed.

God’s Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Britta". The script is cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word.

Pastor Britta Meiers Carlson