

A Pilgrimage* to the Southern Border

Wednesday, January 10 - Monday January 15, 2024

Sponsored by:

**The Adult Faith and Life Department:
Plymouth Church UCC of Shaker Hts, Ohio
and
Good Shepherd UCC of Sahaurita, Arizona**

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“To undertake a pilgrimage is to place yourself at risk.

Not just some of the physical risks, but a deeper risk.

The risk that you might not return as the same person who set out.

The risk that all that you had thought that you knew, understood, had perhaps carefully constructed in your mind, might be blown apart.

But there is a second risk.

The risk that you will be surprised by joy.

That in entering into the physical, metaphysical and historical world of the pilgrimage,

You will encounter people, places, thoughts, feelings, visions, and happenings which take you beyond anything you might have imagined.

Only when you are prepared to chance the deepest dangers of risk or joy do you become a true pilgrim.

True pilgrimage changes lives.”

*Written by Martin Palmer,
Director of the International Consultancy
on Religion, Education and Culture, Manchester, UK*

The United States-Mexico borderlands have always been a beautiful mix of culture, language, cuisine, economies, and people. It has also been a place of struggle, of high and low temperatures, a fragile environment, and the push and pull of immigration. This pilgrimage will offer participants an immersive opportunity to experience that full range of expressions, excitement through to compassion and lament as we travel and lodge together, worship and gather with others of faith from across the country at an annual event called “*Commonground On the Border*”.

Through the immersion experiences of field trips, exploration through the visual arts and music, touching the culture, engaging residents on both sides of the border and having deeper conversations about the complicated issues that collide here, our experiences will both challenge and embody our spirituality, forming new questions we were unable to form before being there. There will also be times of relaxation and renewal.

Artists-in-residence on staff at the *Commonground*... event will engage us in useful practices of meditation and celebration. Borderland residents, national and international scholars and activists will stimulate our understandings of what it's like to live, work, and migrate in and through the "borderlands" sharing their perspectives on our current border and immigration crisis. And there will be lots of singing and modes of music-making!

We will stay at a local resort in Green Valley, Arizona; we will eat some meals in community at the "Commonground..." event; other meals we'll share within our pilgrim group, and other times we will eat in the midst of life near the border. When we travel back home, we will have been enriched with new images, new understandings of what 'humanitarian efforts' look like for migrants and a deep gratitude for all those with whom we have shared this experience.

This is your invitation to join this group of pilgrims, beckoning for a new word that will enhance the word 'immigration', with a sacred quality.

Plymouth Church UCC of Shaker Hts, Ohio is an *open and affirming congregation, a just peace congregation* in the United Church of Christ. It is a Christ-centered community led by the Holy Spirit that supports the spiritual journey of all who strive to boldly live out their faith in the world in service to God.

Good Shepherd UCC of Sahaurita, Ariz, has for twenty-five years been actively engaged in humanitarian migrant work in the Sonoran Desert and across the southern border. Good Shepherd is a leading *Immigraton Welcoming Church* within the United Church of Christ and is known as a vibrant, relaxed and diverse community of faith that gathers to nurture, share and celebrate the wonder of life. In all they do Good Shepherd community seeks to promote justice and compassion in the way of Jesus.

Read more about the Arizona event: www.Commongroundontheborder.wordpress.com

Interested in this pilgrimage?: Contact Brenda Grauer at: pilgrimagebig2024@gmail.com or Matt Wooster at: mwooster@plymouthchurchucc.org