



Valley Covenant News

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Brought to U.S. When 3 Days Old, Bethel Woman Faces Deportation

Excerpt from Covenant Companion March article written by: Stan Friedman

The U.S. Government has told Rebecca Trimble she must leave the country immediately or face deportation.

Rebecca Trimble had already planned menus and purchased food for the Covenant Church's Alaska Conference Annual Meeting scheduled to be hosted by her church, Bethel (Alaska) Evangelical Covenant Church at the end of April. —but the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) informed her that if she doesn't leave the country immediately, she will be deported.

Rebecca was brought to the United States from Mexico by her adoptive parents in 1989 when she was just three days old. It wasn't until she was 22 that she learned she wasn't a citizen. Rebecca and her husband, John, are trusting God that she will be allowed to stay in the only country she has ever called home.

"I feel like God can move mountains and he is in control," Rebecca said on Saturday. "Ultimately he's the one who's going to make this plan for me."

In 2008, Rebecca was honored with the "Citizenship Award" from her high school in Vancouver, Washington, for demonstrating excellent character. The same year she voted in the presidential election. At the time, Rebecca knew she was adopted but had no reason to doubt that she was a U.S. citizen. She did not learn of her birthplace until 2012 when she applied in Washington for the new "REAL ID", which requires several documents, including proof of citizenship and a birth certificate. Officials turned down her application saying she did not have the appropriate documentation. State Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky told her colleagues that Rebecca Trimble "is exactly the kind of person that every community, every state, and every country should be excited and honored to have."

The news stunned Rebecca. She had a Social Security card, driver's license, was employed, and was registered to vote.

Rebecca's parents told her that she was born in Tecate, Mexico, in August 1989. They were American citizens living in Oregon who were unable to have children. An American missionary in Mexico told them about a young woman who was pregnant and wanted to put her child up for adoption. Her adoptive parents paid for the mother's hospital care and delivery and thought they were doing the process legally. They drove to Mexico to pick up Rebecca and when they drove across the border back into the United States, officers searched the vehicle and allowed them to enter the country. A few weeks later they received a Mexican birth certificate in the mail. However, the USCIS has since determined that document to be forged.

Since learning of her status, Rebecca has sought to become a naturalized citizen. On February 10, she received a certified letter in the couple's post office box and returned to the car, where John was waiting. "She grabbed the mail and recognized the certified label, so she knew what it was," recalls John. "You see it and you expect the news to be bad."

The letter informed her that her three-year-old application had been denied. She would have to leave the country in 33 days.

"She's no more Mexican than I am as far as her life experiences," John said. "How can they think it is OK for them to say out of the blue that you have to leave the only country you've ever lived in and go to a foreign country in 33 days? She doesn't even speak Spanish."

John went to dental school at the Oregon Health & Science University in 2013. During that time he joined the U.S. Army Reserve. He also received a federal scholarship that would cover his dental school costs, provided he agreed to work in an underserved area for two years after graduation. To fulfill that obligation John, Rebecca, and their two children moved to Bethel in July 2017. He now works at a community health center.

The Trimbles have attended Bethel Covenant Church since the week they arrived in the community of roughly 6,000 residents. They immediately became involved with a small group. "They are servant leaders," says pastor Adam London. "They are dedicated. They show up at every church service ready to serve."

(Continued on pg. 2)

(Continued from Pg.1)
Throughout the fall and spring, Rebecca organizes and cooks meals for their “supper club,” when the church hosts 50 to 100 homeless people once a month. She also helps organize baby showers and volunteers for the Awana children’s program.

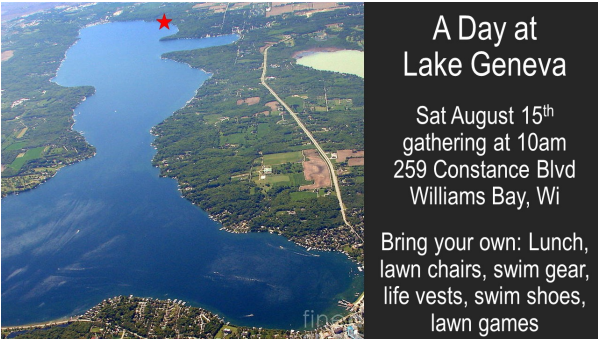
The Bethel congregation has helped with some of their legal expenses through fundraisers. One member of the congregation, State Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky, addressed the Alaska House of Representatives recently to speak out for Trimble. She told them, “Rebecca is a kind, compassionate military wife. She is a doting mother of two. In short, she is exactly the kind of person that every community, every state, and every country should be excited and honored to have.”

The Trimbles say they think they have a strong case for Rebecca to stay in the United States. Her birth was not recorded in the Mexican birth registry, and no other records exist indicating that she was born in that country. Because Mexico has no proof that she is a Mexican citizen, the government doesn’t have to accept her, John said.

The family have received support from around the country, as well as from politicians since their story was first published on March 3 in a small Anchorage publication, The Alaska Landmine. The story had more than 20,000 shares in the first three days after it was posted. John said his own faith was strengthened the evening the article was published online. He was teaching a group of third and fourth graders. As part of the lesson that night, one of the students read Psalm 37:3-6 from the New Living Translation Bible:

“Trust in the Lord and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you your heart’s desires.
Commit everything you do to the Lord.
Trust him, and he will help you.
He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.”

“I had to look at it again,” John said. “It was like a word of God to the heart of our situation—“the justice of your cause.””



From Pastor Rick

Many of our church members and attenders have been able to continue their faithful giving to the Lord’s work, even in this season of pandemic. To all of you who have been so generous, we are deeply thankful. Our giving has not fallen dramatically behind, as has happened in so many churches.

We were also blessed to receive the federal payroll protection grant intended to protect workers from layoffs.

Since our staff compensation expenses are covered by the grant, we decided to use, out of local giving, an amount equal to the grant each month – to bless and support ministries and servants with whom we are or have been partnered.

The targeted giving destinations for this support include:

- a. The Evangelical Covenant Church, our denominational family;
- b. The Central Conference of the ECC, our regional Covenant partner;
- c. HarborPoint Covenant camps in the Central Conference (Covenant Point in upper Michigan, and Covenant Harbor in Lake Geneva Wisconsin);
- d. Covenant Ministries or missionaries with whom we have prior connections;
- e. Covenant Churches which are experiencing unusually challenging circumstances because of the pandemic (often inner-city ministries, often primarily churches of color)
- f. Covenant Churches that are stepping into the present cultural challenges in innovative and visionary ways, to meet needs in their communities; and finally,
- g. non-ECC-affiliated ministries and missionaries with whom we have prior history.

In only the last two months, we have been made able to stand in solidarity with the following ministries – making gifts that are investments in the Kingdom of God:

- The Evangelical Covenant Church
- The Central Conference
- Gospel Way Covenant Church, and Pastor Antoine Taylor
- Atonement Covenant Church, and Pastor Karen Brewer
- Iglesia del Pacto Evangelico de Douglas Park
- Iglesia del Pacto Evangelico de Albany Park, and Pastor Tomas Sanabria
- Iglesia Vida Eterna, Rockford, and Pastor Mario Torres
- Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis – starting a major food pantry in the neighborhoods impacted by the riots
- Bethel Covenant Church, Bethel, Alaska – legal defense fund supporting Rebecca Trimble against deportation
- Doug Olson, missionary to Thailand, who met Christ at Valley Covenant
- Pastor Munir Kakish, Ramallah Christian Outreach in the Holy Land

I want to encourage your continued faithful giving to Valley Covenant – not simply because it keeps our ministry moving forward – not even because it allows us the joy of blessing other ministries around the globe – but ultimately because it invests all of our hearts in the vision and values of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.