

Bethlehem
United Church of Christ

The **Visitor**
August 2016



“Great Expectations ~ A Reprise” Luke 4:14-21

Rev. John L. Kennedy

The great thing about the Bible is that what Jesus spoke about 2000 years ago is still teaching us right here today at Bethlehem UCC. What’s going on in this passage here? Let’s take a look.

What is the setting?

Jesus, as you know, has just been baptized and received the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of Chapter 4, Jesus has returned from the wilderness after having been tempted 40 days and nights in that wilderness. Jesus is at the beginning of his early Galilean ministry.

Where is this setting?

The scene is in Nazareth, which is located in lower Galilee, just

southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Nazareth as you know is the hometown of Jesus, and it is in the synagogue where we find Jesus.

When is this occurring?

It is on the Sabbath. Translate all that into our time and context and that means Jesus had gone to church. Jesus is talking to the religious community including the Rabbis and the Scribes.

What does Jesus do in this scene?

He stands up, reads scripture from the Prophets, and then hands the scroll back to the attendant. This was all customary for what would have happened in

Jesus’ day. A good Jew like Jesus would have gone to synagogue and as a teacher would have stood and read from scripture and then sat down to begin teaching. Nothing unusual is happening here in his actions. Jesus and friends from his hometown are having church. What *is* out of the ordinary is that Jesus tells the congregation something that makes them squirm later on in the story. Jesus is not pointing an accusing finger or judging them with his words. He is saying up front what the very essence of his ministry is going to be all about, and it pushes them past their comfort zone. This was not what they were expecting.

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This is a picture of our Bethlehem youth visiting Virginia Seitz at the Saline Evangelical Home on June 12. We were there to set up and fill bird feeders and presented a check for the Life Enrichment Fund to be used for the gardens around the home.

This year we will have two classrooms: preschool on the first floor and a one-room classroom for kindergarten through grade 6. Our teachers are Julie Feldkamp, Jan Eadie, and Nancy Pieske. Older youth are welcome to help in the classrooms or can be with friends and family in the sanctuary for the service. We welcome all youth who would like to participate in the service, including helping as acolytes, reading, performing, ushering, or serving communion. Let us know if you would like to participate.

Bring your ideas for youth mission projects for this year. Diana Slaughter will help us take your inspired ideas into projects we can work on during the year. Please join us in coffee hour where we can meet the teachers and enjoy some treats. **Hope to see you on September 11.**

The Education Ministry Team welcomes back our youth for the 2016-17 school year.

We are looking forward to having everyone back after a summer off.

Rally day will be Sunday September 11.

Once again we hope to collect school supplies that we can donate to students in Washtenaw County who have unstable housing. Please bring any donations to the altar for our Children's Moment.

SCHOOL SUPPLY SUGGESTIONS:

- Backpacks, especially gender-neutral ones for older students
- Colored pencils
- Pencil sharpeners
- Washable markers
- Loose-leaf notebooks
- Pencil boxes
- Flash drives
- Calculators
- 1-inch binders
- Pink erasers
- Rulers
- Yellow highlighters
- Clothing (including socks, underwear)

September Visitor deadline



Deadline
to submit
articles and
photos is
August 31.

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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Phone 734-665-6149 Fax 734-665-3399

www.bethlehem-ucc.org



www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2



www.pinterest.com/bethlehemucca2



www.youtube.com/user/BethlehemChurchA2

Upcoming Events & Information

*Community Outreach Opportunities
are detailed on page 8.*



**ONA Movie Night: *Call Me Malcolm*
August 16, 7:00 p.m.**

Please join us for this inspiring movie
and some great fellowship,
popcorn, and rainbow popsicles!

Call Me Malcolm is an amazing story of the human spirit and God's spirit and the liberating struggle to realize and express with confidence the marvelous gift of one's truest sense of self. As Malcolm shares his own story and through the stories of others we meet, *Call Me Malcolm* offers us a glimpse into the real lives of real people who are transgender.



FLU VACCINATION CLINIC

Flu season is fast approaching, and it's that time of year again to take precautions to prevent the flu.

The Evangelical Homes of Michigan will provide flu vaccinations at Bethlehem Church on **Sunday, September 18, 7:45 a.m. until 10:15 a.m.**

*Please note the time so that you can plan appropriately
(before and after 8:30 service & BEFORE the 10 a.m. service).*

- Encourage your family and friends (18 years and older) to take advantage of this opportunity.
- Bring your Medicare card OR provide a donation of \$15 to cover the cost of this service.
- No one will be turned away.

Save the Date

FRIDAY - NOVEMBER 11
Bethlehem's Fall Luncheon & Bazaar
Sponsored by Women of Bethlehem

FRIDAY - OCTOBER 7: 6-9:00 PM

Oktoberfest Picnic - Willmann Hall

Sponsored by Fellowship Ministry Team

Start of our Heritage Weekend

**Brats, Hot Dogs,
German Potato Salad,
Spatzen, Sauerkraut, Chips,
Cookies, Brownies,
Beer and Wine (for sale),
Coffee, Water, Lemonade.**



**Sign-up sheets
will be up in September.
We know it's going to be a
wonderful evening.**

Sunday, September 11, 2 p.m.

Bethlehem Fellowship Golf Outing
9-hole Scramble at Brookside Golf Club
Golfers of all ages are welcome.
Sign up next to the church office.

See page 8 for details.

Questions: Contact Tom Ziesemer



**SUMMER
READING!**
*Get all your
summer
reads at the*

newly stocked Bethlehem Library.
4 for \$1, now through Labor Day.
All proceeds support Bethlehem.

"Great Expectations - A Reprise"

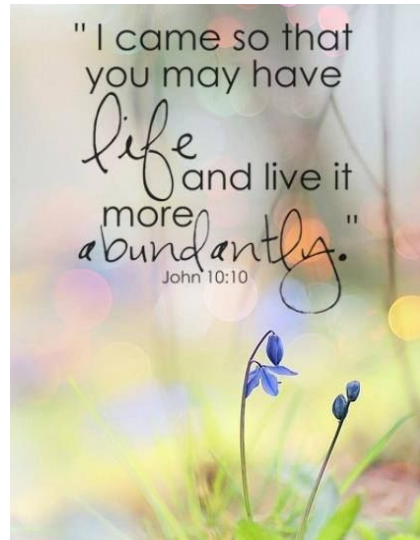
Rev. John L. Kennedy

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What pushes them past their expectations and comfort zone? Jesus is saying that God's mercy, love, forgiveness, and compassion were being extended to all, not just them. God's love is not an excluding love but an including love that is reaching far beyond their wildest imagination. This is "Good News," because Jesus is saying to them (and to us), Don't count anyone out of God's love and the possibilities that God's love can bring for our lives. Don't count anyone else out, and don't count yourself out! God's saving grace can reach each one of us no matter where we are in our life! And it is reaching us at Bethlehem UCC and the Ann Arbor community, too! All things are possible in Christ Jesus, and God has great expectations for us.

But there are some things required of us. What does the Lord require of us? When Jesus reveals the mission of his ministry, he is also letting us know what the mission of the church is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus proclaims while reading the scroll, *"God has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* (Luke 4:14-21). Jesus is saying that his ministry is going to be one of both word and deed, not just one or the other, because the two must go together. Words without deeds are useless because they do not express the love that they are meant to, and if we are going to do deeds with-

out the Word of God, then we can do that through any secular charitable organization. Jesus' ministry is not just about bringing salvation for the purpose of eternal life but also for this life, right here and right now. God wants us to have life and to have it abundantly, in this life and in the next. God wants *all* of God's children to have life abundantly: American children, Syrian children, European



children, and illegal immigrant children who have just crossed over the Texas border.

As Jesus lays out what his ministry is going to be about, he is showing us what the high ground is. The high ground is to please God and not humanity. So often we fall into one of three categories.

We lean to one extreme, where religion is "soft" and everything is relative, to another. Religious beliefs are like a religious cafeteria. Take what you like and what works for you and leave the rest. It's all "relative" and we can know nothing for sure. This is not Good News because we cannot with confidence claim the reality of our loving God and what God has done and is doing for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the other extreme we have those who make religion become like a tyrant. Christianity becomes about judgment, condemnation, legalism, and fear and is motivated by a self-righteous attitude that conveys that all must believe exactly as they believe, or we have bought a one-way ticket to Hell or El Paso, Texas, whichever is hotter. This is not Good News either, because it does not liberate but binds one in fear and a sense of coercion.

Then there is the third way, which is the way of mediocrity that tries to be neither hot nor cold but only "lukewarm" in its passion and convictions. It takes the safe position that offends no one and proclaims and claims nothing boldly. It tries its best not to offend. Churches in this category are dying at a steady rate because they are no longer speaking with a compelling vision in reaching the world today. Our world is "spiritually hungry" and desperately in need of "good news communities" that have spiritual depth, authentic community, joy, and gratitude and are willing to take risks.

I remember a story that my mother read to me as a child. The story goes something like this. Once upon a time, there was a farmer and his son and their donkey. They were going on a journey to a market several towns away with all of their goods on the back of the donkey. As they approached the first town, people began to point at them and say, *"How foolish, both of you walking all this distance"*

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when you have a donkey to carry you.” So the farmer put his son on the donkey, and they continued on their journey. As they traveled, people began to point at them and say, “What a horrible son! He is riding the donkey while you, his father, are made to walk. Your son should have respect for you. You should ride and let your son walk.” So the farmer told his son to get down, and the father began riding the donkey. But again people were criticizing him and saying, “What a bad father you are to let your son walk while you ride.” So both the son and the father got on the donkey and began riding the poor beast at the same time. But once again the people shouted in dismay and anger saying, “How horrible the way you abuse this poor donkey by making him carry the both of you.” So the farmer and his son got off the donkey and picked the donkey up and carried the donkey on their shoulders. What a sight this was, the farmer and the son carrying the donkey on their shoulders. They then began to cross over a very rickety, dangerous, and narrow footbridge, high above a river below. As they were walking across the footbridge, the donkey was very frightened and began bucking. The donkey fell off their shoulders, over the bridge, and down to the river below and drowned.

**The moral of this story is:
“Please all, please none, and lose what you have in the bargain.”**

So which way do we take? We take the best way, as Jesus proclaimed in the mission of his ministry. He took neither the left, nor the right, nor the lukewarm middle, but the high ground. But

what is the high ground? We hear it in Micah 6: *“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”*

This is the high ground. Our



deeds and words must be connected. It is what Micah told us to do; what Jesus told us to do. Anything less is either cheap grace or no grace at all. Jesus said that the Ten Commandments boiled down to two requirements: first and foremost love God with all our heart, all our minds, with all our strengths, and with all our soul; and second, to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the high ground, that we must open our hearts, open our minds, and open our doors, to God and our neighbors. This is the way we can prepare ourselves to better hear the word of God speaking to us at Bethlehem UCC. As we hear God still speaking, we will know better how to respond in love to God’s word. As we respond in love, we will continue to hear even more loudly God’s word sustaining, feeding, and leading us. We are not called to be perfect, but we are called to be faithful. As a pastor, I might not meet everyone’s

expectations. I seldom meet all of the expectations I have of myself. But we will do our best with God’s help to be faithful to our leading. I ask that we pray for one another and for our community. I also know that there might be times here at Bethlehem UCC that might not meet all of our expectations. Every church experiences challenging and disappointing times, but we do not face them alone. God is with us, and we are walking with each other. We cannot expect that we will achieve perfection in all things, but we can be faithful with God’s help and grace.

I pray for and look forward to a long and lasting relationship with you in this faith community because so many of you have so much to offer and have already and will touch so many lives in positive ways.

Let us open our hearts, minds, and doors to the healing power of God’s grace and mercy. Let us open our hearts, minds, and doors to all those who will indeed come looking for God’s mercy and grace, as we embrace God, one another, and the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

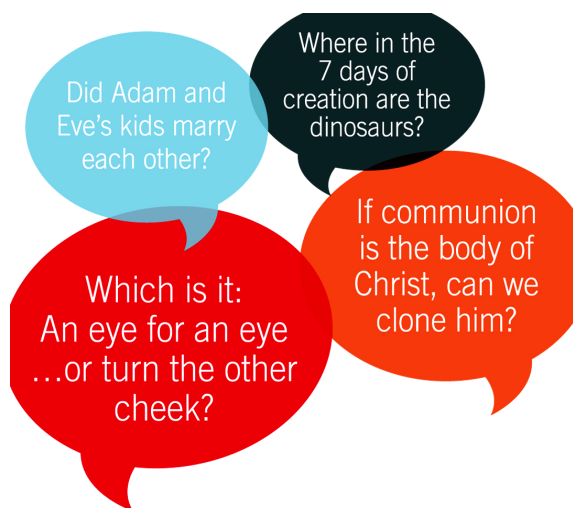
Let us take confidence in the words that the Lord our God spoke to Jeremiah, *“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

God’s grace, Pastor John

It's the Simple Things – Building Community Awareness

By Pastor Greg Briggs

In the past few months here at Bethlehem, you might have noticed some new United Church of Christ-themed images and phrases on our monitors, in the bulletins, and even on some of the buttons we have. All of this is coming from the UCC's new **Stillspeaking 2.0 campaign**. It's an effort to help local congregations better communicate their vision, mission, and love of Jesus Christ. There are many new graphics and very practical and useful ways to improve the church's website and social media presence.



You're invited. So are your questions.

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

What impressed me the most about the Stillspeaking 2.0 Toolkit was that it placed local community awareness and outreach as an essential communication strategy. It emphasizes that there are many "inexpensive (often free) ways to generate awareness for your church." Specifically, the toolkit gives a number of suggested "Community Engagement Events," including Worship beyond the Pews, Establish Community Partnerships, Host Free Community Events, Host Mixers for All, and Open Educational Series, and it asks if our church is a polling place. This got me thinking about the ways we already engage with the larger community and if there are ways to improve what we already do.

Signage

One of the primary ways we engage with our larger community and let them know what we believe is with our signs and banners. They do the work of spreading the Gospel message 24/7. They are also particularly helpful when we have times of extra activity around the church. We also use banners to advertise specific events and worship times for Advent and Lent, but those signs don't speak to who we are as a church.

We are a church that affirms that "Jesus didn't reject people, and neither do we." We also specifically affirm groups that have been made to feel unwelcome at other churches. It's important to let people who have been hurt by people of faith in the past know that ours is a place that will value them for who they are.



Parking Fundraisers

This is a tried and true mainstay of our church. I have been over an hour away from Ann Arbor and been recognized as being from "the church that sells parking." Many of our football parkers come back week after week and year after year. For this year's Art Fair parking, we widened our vision. We welcomed people to use our bathrooms and cool off in our lounge. In the lounge were some materials about our church and our denomination.

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To make it easier for people walking by, we opened the 4th Avenue entrance under the awning. Given the hot temperatures, it was a great success. We had many thanks and compliments. We also leveraged our parking fundraiser into a moment of hospitality and a second fundraiser inspired by the recent mission trip to Flint. Everywhere we went in Flint, people made sure there was clean water to drink. Inspired by this, we gave away clean, cold water. Instead of charging for the water, we asked for an additional donation for Flint. We raised an additional \$60 for Flint. It wasn't a large fundraiser, but it gave us another avenue of conversation with people passing by.

Pokémon GO

There's a new video game that has a large number of people coming to churches. This game, Pokémon GO, uses a smart phone to have players go to specific, real-world locations to get the items they need to play the game. Our church is a Pokémon site (or PokéStop), and our cemetery has at least half a dozen PokéStops and a Pokémon gym. This gives us an opportunity to have our signs and have our members be a welcoming presence.

Website

Our website is how many visitors get more information about our church before coming to worship. Estimates say that between 70-90% of all church visitors first go to a church's website or social media pages. We include our church's website on all our advertisements and promotional materials. The Welcome Ministry has just committed to spearheading an update of our website, using the resources listed in the Stillspeaking 2.0 campaign. How else do you see our church reaching out to the larger community? How are we showing what we believe and how our belief guides our actions?

**Here's A
Revelation:
God didn't end
in Revelation.**



SCHOOL-SUPPLY DONATIONS FOR ALPHA HOUSE

Each August, Alpha House hosts a Family Reunion picnic for those families who have stayed at Alpha House over the past year. This is a joyful opportunity to touch base with many of the parents and children we all come to care about during their stay at Alpha House, to hear their stories, and (we hope!) to revel in their successes.

At the picnic, we provide back-to-school backpacks and school supplies for the children who attend and later for our in-house kids as well. This year's Family Reunion picnic will be on August 20.

***Below is a wish list of supplies they need. Please leave your donations in the office or the library.
Thank you!***

Our next service opportunity with Alpha House is Thursday, October 2, for dinner and childcare. Contact Stacey Stites at rickandstace@comcast.net if you would like to volunteer. Thank you!

Wish List of School Supplies

- Backpacks
- Folders (2-pocket)
- Notebooks (3- and 5-subject)
- Binders (trapper-keeper style & 3-ring)
- Paper (wide-rule, college-rule, & graph paper)
- Pencils (mechanical)
- Pens (blue, black, & red ballpoint)
- Markers (fine-line & broad, washable)
- Sharpies, highlighters, & crayons
- Pencil cases & boxes
- Calculators (graphing & middle-school level)
- Kleenex packs & hand sanitizer
- Fun supplies (erasers, pencils, mini notepads, stickers, journals, & sketchbooks)



Bethlehem Church
Ongoing Outreach Opportunities.
Please consider joining in!
Sign-up sheets are in the office hallway.

ALPHA HOUSE OUTREACH

October 2, 5:30 and 6:45

Volunteers make dinner and help with activities for families using Alpha House for temporary shelter, food, and support services. Email Stacey Stites at rickandstace@comcast.net to help.

5:30 - Dinner

6:45 - After-dinner kids' activities

FOOD GATHERERS COMMUNITY KITCHEN

September 4 (first Sunday of each month)

Please sign up in the office hallway. Cook 12-2:30, Clean 2:30-5

PEACE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Our after-school program is done for the school year. *Fresh Food Distribution Fridays continue throughout the summer from 9-12. Please join us.*

FOOD GATHERERS FOOD BARREL

Bring nonperishable items at any time, and place them in the food barrel in the library.

Brookside Golf Club **Sunday, Sept. 11, 2pm** **9 hole scramble**

The cost for golf and meal \$30 per person.
The meal only \$10 per person.

*Meal will be Italian or Turkey Brats,
 Cold slaw, Baked beans, Potato Salad and chips.*

**Please sign up near the office
 before September 6!!!**

Golfers of all ages are welcome.



Questions:
Please contact Tom Ziesemer
ziesemertn@gmail.com
734 663-0378

WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Harriette Ehnis

Worship Ministry Team Update

The Worship Ministry Team wants to thank all those who provided music ministry at our Sunday Worship services during the summer months:

César Cañón

Grace Kanamuna and the string quartet

Mark Herwick and Sarah Herwick

Darlene Kuperus

Allison Prost

Adrienne Paton

The varying approaches to music ministry were very inspirational.

Gail Jennings will be returning to the organ on Sunday, August 21.

Our music director, Arianne Abela, will be taking a family leave from September 1 to January 1, 2017. We wish her and her husband, Noah, well as they await the birth of their first child.

Pastor John, Carol Leyshock, and the Worship Ministry Team continue to interview candidates for the interim music director position.

We want to thank our liturgists who participated in our worship services this summer.: Karen Samford, John Samford, Sarah Herwick, and Jan Eadie. We continue to seek lay liturgists to assist with our Sunday services. Please see Pastor John or any member of the worship team for details.

The Worship Ministry Team is working with the Member Care Ministry Team to recognize those individuals in Friends in Ministry who faithfully visit or call individuals who cannot worship with us at Bethlehem on Sunday mornings. **This recognition will take place on Sunday, September 25.**

Plans have already started for our traditional Heritage Sunday worship service on October 9.

The archives group is working with the worship team to provide a meaningful reflection of our German heritage here at Bethlehem.

Over the summer months, the 8:30 service has continued to flourish. Several pews were removed to accommodate guest musicians and make our chapel more wheelchair accessible. The newly acquired sound system has made a marked improvement for those who are hearing impaired.

Again, many thanks to the Altar Guild for so faithfully preparing our communion elements for distribution each month. We serve communion alternately by intinction and in the pews.

Worship Ministry Team:

Arianne Abela, Caroline Ashenfelter, Sue Buday, Harriette Ehnis, Pastor John Kennedy, Shannon O'Reilly, Gary Rogers, and Tom Zeisemer





MEMORIALS & GIFTS

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Rev. & Mrs. Schmale Memorial

RADIO FUND

Fritz Kienzle Memorial

Ruth Segura Memorial

Gifts listed were received through
July 31, 2016

RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORSHIPS

- July 3** In honor of **Lois Haeussler** from Kathy Warner and the Gilbert and Scherdt families.
- July 31** Sponsored by Alethea Helbig, in loving memory of **Lois Haeussler**.

PARISH RECORDS



DEATHS

July 13, 2016
Ruth Segura

July 24, 2016
Lois Haeussler

In Memory of Sable

Sable, the beloved therapy dog of Paul and Barb Marshall, passed away on August 9, 2016. Barb and Paul are certain that there is a new 4-legged furry angel in heaven bringing smiles and joy to everyone she meets at this very moment.

She was within one hour of death on March 31 when her spleen ruptured and she needed life-saving surgery. She successfully completed 5 rounds of chemo but the cancer came back and attacked her liver. That is when we knew we had to do the humane thing and put her down.

For the last 5 years, Sable has visited residents at the Chelsea Retirement Community and the Saline Evangelical home, where she visited some of our Bethlehem members on a weekly basis. She also worked at the Chelsea hospital in both the Head Pain unit and the Cancer center, and subbed in Behavioral Health. In addition, she had been the official "reading dog" at North Creek Elementary school in Chelsea and a READ dog at the Chelsea library for the past 4 years.

Yes, Sable was one busy dog and she LOVED to "go to work"! Sable was one awesome dog who will live in our hearts forever.





CHURCH WORLD SERVICE



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE KITS— WE ARE COLLECTING NOW FOR OUR FALL SHIPMENT

The need is great because of world disasters!

Bethlehem Church continues to collect kit items, assemble kits, and ship them to Church World Service for worldwide distribution. Items may be brought to church and placed in the white cabinet in the Gallery or dropped off at the Church office. You may supply a complete kit or donate individual items. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Note: Church World Service is discontinuing the distribution of Baby Kits. If you have items for them, please bring them to Church. We'll forward them for use by Church World Service.

Hygiene Kit
School Kit

- One hand towel measuring approximately 15" x 28" to 16" x 32" (no fingertip, bath, dish, or micro-fiber)
- One washcloth
- One wide-tooth comb removed from the package
- One fingernail or toenail clipper removed from the package
- One bath-size bar of soap in the wrapper
- One toothbrush in the package
- Ten standard size Band-Aids

- One pair of blunt scissors removed from the package (rounded tip, only)
- Three 70-count bound notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages (no loose-leaf or filler paper)
- One 30-centimeter/12" ruler
- One hand-held pencil sharpener removed from the package
- One large eraser (no pencil cap erasers)
- Six new, unsharpened pencils with erasers, removed from the package
- One box of 24 crayons (only 24)
- One 12" x 14" to 14" x 17" cotton or lightweight solid-colored canvas bag with cloth handles (no reusable shopping bags, backpacks, or bags with logos)

Covenant of Welcome

We, at Bethlehem United Church of Christ, declare ourselves an
Open and Affirming congregation where we celebrate Christ's extravagant love.
We covenant with God and one another to welcome the diverse tapestry of all people,
no matter their age, race, nationality, ethnicity,
economic circumstance, marital or family status, physical or mental ability,
sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
We invite everyone—believers and questioners, seekers and skeptics—
to share their gifts in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship,
sacraments, responsibilities, and blessings of our congregation.



Bethlehem's Ministry Team

Rev. John Kennedy	Pastor
Rev. Greg Briggs	Associate Pastor
Rev. Orval L.E. Willimann	Pastor Emeritus
Carol Leyshock	Parish Administrator
Betty Clark	Financial Administrator
Donna Whitney	Office Support Specialist
Arianne Abela	Director of Music
Gail Jennings	Organist
Jim Rowan	Director of Handbells

The *Visitor*
is printed 12 times a year

Our Mission

To worship God,
To learn and live the
Word of God,
To engage in Christian
fellowship and service,
To invite others to join us
on our faith journey in the
ministry of Jesus Christ.