

# The Visitor

Bethlehem United Church of Christ  
December 2016

*an invitation to grow in spirit and serve with joy*



## “Possibilities in Impossible Times”

Rev. John L. Kennedy

*In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.*

*This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

*Luke 2:1-7*

On Christmas Eve, we will celebrate the impossible possibility of this story. God always uses unlikely people and impossible times to make miraculous possibilities become realities. In the Hebrew Scriptures, all of God's faithful have come from an unlikely cast of characters in the stories of Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebekah (the Syrian); Jacob (the con man); Joseph (the one left for dead); hot-tempered Moses (a murderer) and his black Ethiopian wife Zipporah; and the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, etc.

But what could be more miraculous than the Christ event? First, God uses Zechariah and Elizabeth (already members of AARP and taking Geritol) to bring John

the Baptist into the world. These childless, elderly parents, for whom having children is impossible, deliver the one to prepare the way for Christ. Was that even possible?

God chooses Mary and Joseph to bring Christ the Messiah (the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace) to live, and die, as one of us, all while defeating sin and death. Wow! The Gospel story tells us that Mary is a pregnant, unmarried teenager and Joseph is a fiancé who overcomes suspicion and doubt to be a father and unite the family.

(continued on page 4)

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**HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS AND VACATIONS**

**Dec. 26–27** Church office closed (please note these hours if you plan to bring your end of the year pledges to the church office)

**Dec. 23–30** Carol out of office

**Jan. 2** Church office closed

**AMAZON SMILE**

DID YOU KNOW that Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Bethlehem United Church of Christ whenever you shop on AmazonSmile? **Simply click this link before you begin your Amazon shopping:** <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-1381120> Pass this link on to your family and friends! (This link is also in your group email. Not receiving Bethlehem's group email? Please email [donnawhitney@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:donnawhitney@bethlehem-ucc.org) to get added to the contact list.)

**OUR FAIR-TRADE SERRV SHOP**

Our fair-trade Serrv shop, located in the Fellowship Hall, is a great way to shop and do some great outreach, all at the same time. Serrv is a nonprofit, fair-trade organization dedicated to lifting disadvantaged artisans, farmers, and their families out of poverty. Serrv connects you with artisans and farmers in 30 countries around the world! You can buy items directly from our shop, or look at the online catalog ([www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org)), then contact Diana Slaughter (734-677-0747 or [dlslder@umich.edu](mailto:dlslder@umich.edu)) to place your order. Placing your catalog order through our shop saves shipping costs, and your order may be eligible for a discount.

**THE BETHLEHEM LIBRARY**

And, of course, **remember to shop at the Bethlehem Library.** Books make great gifts, and you will find a wide variety of books for various ages and interests. At \$1 each, our books are a bargain that can't be beat!

**January Visitor Deadline**

Deadline  
to submit  
articles and  
photos is  
December 28.

**BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104  
Phone 734-665-6149 Fax 734-665-3399

[www.bethlehem-ucc.org](http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org)



[www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2](https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2)



[www.pinterest.com/bethlehemuccA2](https://www.pinterest.com/bethlehemuccA2)



[www.youtube.com/user/BethlehemChurchA2](https://www.youtube.com/user/BethlehemChurchA2)

# Upcoming Events & Information

*Community Outreach Opportunities are detailed on page 9.*

**Lecture/Talk at Bethlehem - JANUARY 8 after the 10:00 service (lunch provided)**

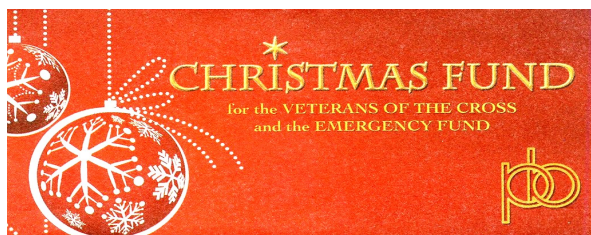
***"Go and Do Likewise: Putting LGBT+ Inclusion into Practice"***

We have invited Benjamin Hollenbach, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, to join us after 10 o'clock worship on January 8 for a presentation of "Go and Do Likewise: Putting LGBT+ Inclusion into Practice." Benjamin's dissertation project focuses on LGBT+ inclusion in mainline Protestant groups in the United States, and he conducts his research in the state of Michigan. Broadly, Benjamin investigates how faith factors into people's response to social change, and what faith and belief motivate people to do in their everyday lives. **Come join us!**

## DECEMBER 18

### UCC Annual Christmas Fund Mission Offering.

This special giving, one of our "5 for 5" offerings, helps active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ. Your gift provides for the supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, emergency grants, and Christmas gift checks.



See page 6 for all the special Advent events and community service projects our Education Ministry is doing.



## DECEMBER 11

**CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM "Un-Frozen" (during 10:00 service)**



**ADVENT WORKSHOP (after 10:00 service)**

**ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK (after 10:00 service)**

Please sign up near the office to bring a main dish, salad/side dish, or dessert for the All-Church Potluck.

## DECEMBER PRETZELS

### PARKING LOT PRETZELS – December 9

Pretzel rolling/baking, 7 a.m. (cleanup, 11 a.m.)  
Pretzel sales 11 a.m.–1:30 p.m.



### AUXILIARY MOTHERS STUDY

Please join us **December 14, 1 p.m.** in the Gallery for Christmas games.



### MARY MARTHA BIBLE STUDY

**Tuesday, December 13, 10 a.m. in the library.**

**We meet monthly on the second Tuesday.**

### Bethlehem Veterans' Monthly Breakfast

**December 2, 2016, at 8:30 a.m.  
Classic Cup Café on Jackson Rd.**



If you are a military veteran, please join us for breakfast on the first Friday of every month at the Classic Cup Café.

## OLD TESTAMENT CLASS STARTING UP IN JANUARY

**Jamie Dylenski** will be teaching a class about the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) starting January 16. The first class will be an open session to select which themes to cover over the 7 week period. Plan now to be a part in this class each Monday evening from 7-8:30 during January and February.





***"Possibilities in Impossible Times"*****Rev. John L. Kennedy***(continued from page 1)*

Immanuel "God with us" is being born in an animal trough in a livestock stable, not in a palace. The Jewish leaders in power (like Herod, and the Sadducees) are getting it wrong and are planning to kill Christ. Meanwhile, sweaty low-wage shepherds are leaving their fields and traveling to Bethlehem to see the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. Three royal astronomers (Asian, African, and Arabic, and pagan) are traveling thousands of miles from Eastern lands to bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the one whose star has risen. The Magi risk their lives and betray Herod to save the life of Christ.

Today, with all of its impossibilities there are unlikely people in Bethlehem (like you and me) being called and led to take risks of love toward other unlikely people. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year of possibilities to all you Beautiful, unlikely people! Pastor John



## **WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM UPDATE**

Harriette Ehnis, Chairperson

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, please join us each Sunday in Advent. Church families are again lighting the advent candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy—all pointing us to the stable in Bethlehem.

Our ministry team is thoughtfully planning for our Christmas Eve services to be especially inspirational and meaningful. As always, we are planning three different candle lighting services that will support the joy and true meaning of this blessed season.

Take this opportunity to bring your family members together to celebrate the coming of Christ into our lives. This is also the time to think of a neighbor or acquaintance who may be all alone at Christmas. Invite them to join you to celebrate with our Bethlehem family. There is a worship service for everyone.

**Christmas blessings to all!**

## ***Come Celebrate Christmas at Bethlehem***

*Please bring your friends and family to one of our Christmas Eve services*

- 5:00 p.m. The family Christmas service will include lessons and carols, As well as traditional candle lighting. Children are invited to bring an action toy to place in the nativity scene on the altar during the service.
- 7:30 p.m. This will be our traditional candle-light service with lessons and carols. Inspiring music by our Chancel and Handbell choirs, brass, and strings will be provided.
- 11:00 p.m. This is a candle-light service with lessons and carols, communion, and inspirational harp music.



***Please join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the New Year.***

**Please note:** Because Christmas and New Year's Day fall on Sundays this year, worship will be at **10 a.m. only** on **December 25** and **January 1**. The **8:30 service** will resume on **January 8**.



### **NATIVITY DISPLAY**

*Please enjoy the many creches and mangers displayed in the cabinets in the Schmale Lounge.*

*Thank you to Susan Irwin and Judi Erwin for setting up this wonderful display.*

## **Facilities Ministry Team Needs Our Help**

If you see something around our church that needs repair or is malfunctioning— leaky pipes, running toilets, lights not working, drafty windows, etc.— please notify Carol Leyshock, our parish administrator, by phoning the office or sending an email to her at:

[carolleyshock@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:carolleyshock@bethlehem-ucc.org).

Over the past few months, you might have noticed signs posted around the church that say, “Pardon Our Progress.” These areas are a result of the Facilities Ministry Team and several members of the congregation identifying areas in need of repair, upgrading, painting, cleaning, and removal of old and unwanted items.

To date, under a joint effort of professionals and volunteers, we have replastered walls in the fellowship hall, a downstairs coat area and men’s restroom, and the nursery. We have removed old paint from the serving window, and we have cleaned out the pantry, boiler room, kitchens, education classrooms, youth room, sanctuary, medical closet, and storage areas in the basement and above the gym. Repairs were made to the ceiling in the basement table/chair storage room. We have also repaired lighting in the sanctuary and the Fifth Avenue parking lot.

The Fourth Avenue women’s restroom has new windows, and we are in the process of resurfacing the floor and replacing the toilets and stalls.

**PARDON OUR  
PROGRESS  
EXCITING CHANGES  
IN THE WORKS**

These repairs do not include the several building issues that have surfaced over the past year (leaky pipes, elevator, plumbing, tile replacement, etc.).

In addition, our sanctuary, narthex, and landing to the balcony are in particular need of attention. These areas were last painted in the late 1980s, and since that time, we have made several plaster repairs as a result of leaks in the roof. As you have probably noticed, these areas were never repainted. At this time, we are receiving bids from painting contractors, and we will provide the congregation with the cost and our recommendation once we have evaluated each bid.

Our work is ongoing, and funding for the building will continue. We thank you all for your patience as we move forward with facilities projects.

**If you are interested in touring these areas or have questions, please contact Tom Ziesemer or Steve Darr.**

## Education Ministry Team Advent Events

Jane Schmerberg  
Education Ministry Chair

Our **Youth Christmas Program** will be **Sunday morning, December 11, during the 10:00 service.**

Sarah Herwick is directing a program that will capture the spirit of the season with a fun play that will lead us through the Christmas scriptures. All youth are encouraged to participate.

Please contact Sarah Herwick (sarahherwick@gmail.com) or Jane Schmerberg (jmnmd@umich.edu) if you want to be involved. There will be a short rehearsal on **Saturday December 10 from 10:00–11:00** followed by a quick pizza lunch. We want everyone to participate, so please let us know if you want to but can't be at the rehearsals. We will find a way for you to be a part of it.

The **All-Church Potluck** and **Advent Workshop** will follow the service in the Fellowship Hall.

Please bring a dish to share. There is a sign-up sheet outside the office.

There will be crafts to make. Nancy Pieske will have stations set up with fun activities for all ages.



During Advent we will  
be collecting books and toys  
to give to  
Peace Neighborhood Center  
and Washtenaw  
Refugee Welcome.

*There is a big collection box  
in the library. Please help us  
fill it to overflowing!*



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

There's a new  
message greeting  
people entering  
Ann Arbor via Ann  
Arbor-Saline Road  
near I-94.

"Welcome" is  
painted in 10  
different  
languages—along  
with a white dove  
and an olive  
branch—on a  
roadside utility  
box.

The Mitten Tree  
is in the  
Fourth Avenue entrance.  
Please fill it up with new hats,  
gloves, mittens, and scarves.  
These will go to  
Peace Neighborhood Center  
and Hope Clinic.



## More news from the Education Ministry Team

*Jane Schmerberg,  
Education Ministry Chair*

We do have one new opportunity for once-a-month camaraderie for middle- and high-school youth called **Walk & Talk**.

On the **third Sunday of each month**  
we are walking to a nearby restaurant  
for a quick breakfast or drink  
**during the 10:00 service, and breakfast is on us.**

Walk & Talk

**Our next Walk & Talk will be on Sunday, December 18.**

There is no specific agenda. This is just a chance to be with friends  
and walk, talk, and eat together.

Come to the sanctuary ready to leave.

No sign-up is needed. We leave right after the children's moment.



## CHRISTMAS WREATHS AND TREES

### DONOR

Nancy and Paul Thibault  
Lawrence Marshall  
Donna Kearney  
Marg Alber  
Mike & Harriette Ehnis  
Mike & Harriette Ehnis  
Jan Voress

### SMALL WREATHS IN MEMORY OR HONOR OF

In memory of William & Aletta Kulenkamp  
In memory of Mr. & Mrs. John Marshall  
In memory of Mr. & Mrs. Roland Kearney  
In memory of our son, David Alber  
In memory of Martha Ebinger  
In honor of Virginia Seitz  
In memory of Harold & Leta Ristine



Jan Eadie  
Chuck & Mary Raab  
Pat O'Reilly & Shannon O'Reilly  
Marian Caswell  
Kathy Warner  
Judi & Ken Tappe  
Jim & Karen Goforth

### LARGE WREATHS IN MEMORY OR HONOR OF

In memory of Raymond & Elizabeth Lambarth  
In memory of Carl & Jean Raab  
In memory of Laura, Joseph, & John O'Reilly  
In memory of Harry Caswell & Martha Cole  
In memory of Robert Gilbert and Willis & Irene Warner  
In memory of Raymond & Marie Zahn  
In memory of Kellie Goforth

Kathy Marx  
Jim & Mary Lutz  
Gladys Schlenker

### OUTDOOR TREES

In memory of Walter Prochnow  
In memory of Burt & Betty Lutz  
In memory of Skip Allen



## Peace's Annual Toy Drive Begins December 1



Every holiday season, through the generous spirit of committed members of the Peace family, Peace Neighborhood Center is able to help over 300 families by providing toys, clothes and food. For these children and their families, these gifts are a miracle.

If you are interested in supporting this year's drive, please consider purchasing some of the following items and dropping them off to us prior to the beginning of this year's Community Wide Toy and Food Holiday Distribution Dates on Dec. 20th -23rd.

### **Gift Certificates (To give families options)**

- Food (Kroger, Meijer, Busch's)
- Gas (Speedway, Shell)
- Multi-Purpose (Target, Sears, Meijer, Walmart, Visa)
- Toys (Toys R Us, GameStop)
- Clothing (Target, Old Navy, Forever 21, Wet Seal, Kohl's, TJ Maxx)
- Shoes (Foot Locker, Dunhams, Champs, Famous Footwear)
- Entertainment (iTunes, Quality 16 Movies, Rave Cinemas)

### **Toys (for individual children)**

- Barbie dolls (Ethnic preferred)
- Barbie clothes
- Disney's Frozen dolls and toys (Elsa and Anna)
- Monster High toys
- Superhero action figures
- Pokemon cards
- Legos
- Remote control cars & helicopters
- Toy musical instruments
- Sports equipment
- Skate boards
- Scooters
- Learning games
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles toys and accessories
- Board Games
- Art and Project Kits

### **Items for Peace Youth Programs**

- Yoga mats
- Root View Farm
- Mat Counters & Flash Cards



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



**FOOD GATHERERS COMMUNITY KITCHEN**

**December 4 and January 1** (first Sunday of each month)

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

**PEACE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER (111 N. Maple Rd.)**

**December 27** (fourth Tuesday of each month, 2:30–4:45 p.m.)

*(see info below)*

**FOOD GATHERERS FOOD BARREL**

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



**FRESH PRODUCE COLLECTION FOR FOOD GATHERERS—December 18**  
**(3rd Sunday of each month during the winter months)**

Please bring your donations of fresh produce  
to either service and place on the altar.

**Outreach 2016-17 Opportunities**  
**Peace Neighborhood Center**  
**1111 North Maple Road, Ann Arbor**



**Message from Sue Muir**

★ **After School Feeding Program:** I have posted the dates we need volunteers for the winter/spring semester (4th Tuesdays, January–May) on the bulletin board outside the church office. The commitment is from 2:30–4:45. Please consider volunteering!

★ **Every Friday,** January through mid-June, Food Gatherers provides fresh produce for families in-need that we help distribute at Peace Neighborhood Center. 9:00–11:00 No sign-up is necessary

visit Peace's website for more information about their programs  
and assistance to our community.  
[www.peaceneighborhoodcenter.org](http://www.peaceneighborhoodcenter.org)



## MEMORIALS & GIFTS

### CEMETERY MAINTENANCE FUND

Virginia Reppenhagen Memorial

### BETHLEHEM MOTHERS' STUDY CIRCLE

Lois Haeussler Memorial

### PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Bill Fellenberger Memorial

Hilda McLaughlin Memorial

Virginia Reppenhagen Memorial

Mary Haab Schellenberger Memorial

### RADIO FUND

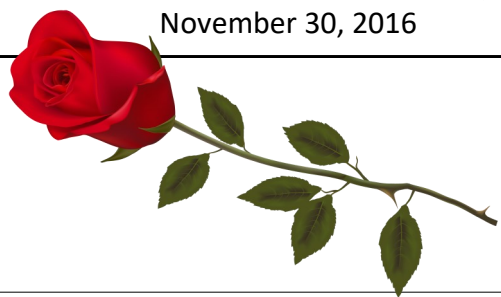
Geraldine Seyfried Memorial

### WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM

Virginia Reppenhagen Memorial

Geraldine Seyfried Memorial

Gifts listed were received through  
November 30, 2016



## RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORSHIPS

**November 6**

In memory of Betty Boman from her  
loving friends and family.

**November 13**

In memory of Mary Haab Schellenberger  
from Mike and Dindy Haab.

**November 20**

In memory of Lois Haeussler from her  
loving family and friends.



### STEWARDSHIP 2017 UPDATE

Thank you to all who have  
returned your "Intent Card" and your  
"Time and Talent"  
information to the church.

**As of December 1 we have received  
123 Intent to Give cards  
for a total of \$225,755.**

If you have not yet returned your  
Intent to Give card or your  
Time and Talent sheet,  
please do so as soon as you are able.

Please call the office  
if you need additional forms.

Thank you for all you do

### NOVEMBER 2016 FINANCIALS

Monthly Target	\$ 28,270.00
Received	\$ 34,461.00
YTD Target	\$ 339,232.00
YTD Received	\$ 308,688.00
Difference	(\$30,544.00)

# Bethlehem Star Bazaar Thank you!

A great big thank-you to all the people who helped make this year's Star Bazaar a big success. It provided us with great fun and fellowship, and the money earned allowed us to make generous donations to Peace Neighborhood Center, Food Gatherers, and Bethlehem Property Improvements.

A high-five to all the people who made donations and the workers, bakers, decorators, furniture movers, salad makers, and dishwashers. Many hands indeed make light work!



## BETHLEHEM CHURCH REACHING OUT

Many thanks to Sue Muir, Roy Muir and Sue Wortman who helped the staff prep food and serve Thanksgiving Dinner to over 80 kids at Peace Neighborhood Center.

Ever wonder how the tree gets put up?



*WE ARE  
BETHLEHEM*



Our Bethlehem UCC Veterans enjoying their monthly fellowship breakfast at the Classic Cup Cafe.



Jesse Wilcox received an Appreciation Medal from fellow veteran Buzz Neeb for his service in Afghanistan. Buzz is a member of the National Veterans Awareness Organization (NVAO).



## 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. Orval L.E. Willimann	Pastor Emeritus
Carol Leyshock	Parish Administrator
Betty Clark	Financial Administrator
Donna Whitney	Office Support Specialist
Arianne Abela	Director of Music
Paolo Debuque	Interim 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.