

The Visitor

Bethlehem United Church of Christ
January & February 2017

an invitation to grow in spirit and serve with joy



“Rebuilding”

Rev. John L. Kennedy

Because of God’s grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?
1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16

Welcome to 2017! Wow! Time marches on and things can change so quickly; lives, communities, countries, and even a whole world in the blink of an eye. For the first time in many years, people are waking up and paying attention to something other than “reality TV,” pop cul-

ture, fashion, and the status quo. The bubble of “life as usual” has been popped for everyone: rich, poor, black, brown, and white. Like Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz*, we have ridden a turbulent storm of historic proportions and are now realizing “we are not in Kansas anymore.” Across the centuries in our crazy world dark storms come and go in the form of depressions, revolutions, wars, inquisitions, reformations, cold wars, and more. Time marches on, sometimes in a gentle breeze and sometimes in howling storms. God is with us in all times, and God is with us now.

In the story of the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy thinks she has to escape her current troubles to “somewhere over the rainbow” to find a real home, true love,

courage/bravery, adventure, safety, worth, and knowledge, because it could never happen in her bleak Kansas of the Depression. Yet she discovers that all those things already exist right in her own midst. Dorothy’s family, friends, and community are “home,” and home is home because of who’s in it. In Dorothy’s home there is a family of incredible courage, heart, and wisdom, and together they are stronger.

In the First Century world of Paul, in the town of Corinth (not Kansas), there was a little church. This church family was made up of converted Jews and many more Gentiles. Conditions were scary and overwhelming. The Jews realize they were not in the

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Leadership Council Report

At our December 2016 meeting, Leadership Council voted to create an Open and Affirming Standing Committee that will be made up of representatives from the ministry teams and other appropriate groups deemed necessary by Leadership Council. We will appoint members from the former ONA Task Force and additional volunteers from the ministry teams to form the committee. The membership and processes for forming this committee may be evaluated and improved as necessary by Leadership Council in the future.

Goals for BUCC for 2017 include working with the ministry teams on a capital improvement plan for our church building and to have a Family Ministries/Faith Formation Director and a Director of Youth Ministries to develop programs that will attract new families. The job descriptions for the two part-time positions have been sent to the Michigan conference office for posting.

It has been an honor to serve with outgoing Leadership Council vice-president Michelle Loukotka and at-large member Cresson Slotten, and we thank them for their diligent service.

Sue Buday, Chair

SUMMARY



A SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

- At the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29, the minutes of the April 17, 2016, Congregational Meeting and the Special Congregational meetings held May 22, 2016, and November 20, 2016, were approved.
- Della DiPietro, Nominating Committee Chair, presented a slate of nominations for open positions. A motion was approved to accept the slate of nominees by affirmation.
- Following a presentation by Jeff Wortman, Finance Ministry Team, the General Operating Budget for 2017 was approved as submitted.
- Steve Darr, Facilities Ministry Team, went over the Capital expenses planned for 2017. Two items on the list exceeded \$15,000 and needed approval by the Congregation.
- Painting of the Sanctuary: Steve Darr introduced Todd Tribble, whose company has been proposed to do this work. Todd explained the work would include the north entry and stairwell as well as the balcony, and the gold leaf trim would be maintained. The color will not be changed, and work would start immediately and take two to three weeks to complete, during which time 10:00 a.m. worship will be held in the Fellowship Hall. A motion was approved for repainting the Sanctuary and 4th Avenue inside walls with costs not to exceed \$43,000.
- Women's restroom at the 4th Avenue entrance: A portion of the work has been done. A motion to complete the renovation was approved with costs not to exceed \$16,900.

March Visitor Deadline



Deadline
to submit
articles and
photos is
February 27.

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

www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2

Upcoming Events & Information

**Hear Ye!
Hear Ye!**

The 10 a.m. worship is in the Fellowship Hall most of February, due to painting of the Sanctuary.

Thank you for your patience.



The office will be closed on February 20 in observance of Presidents' Day.

Community Outreach Opportunities are detailed on page 9.

Mardi Gras HOPS & HALLELUJAHS
Tuesday, February 28, at Conor O'Neill's
See page 8 for details

**FRESH PRODUCE COLLECTION
FOR FOOD GATHERERS
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

(every third Sunday until spring)



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

WALK & TALK, Sunday, February 19, 10 am
Middle- and high-school youth gathering.
See page 6 for details



ASH WEDNESDAY

March 1

6:00 – 8:00 a.m.

Imposition of Ashes, drop-in

12 noon in the Chapel
Worship, Communion, Ashes

7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary
Worship, Communion, Ashes



PRETZEL SCHEDULE

HOLY ROLLERS PRETZEL SALES

February 11, 10:30 – 12:00

PARKING LOT PRETZELS SALES

February 24, 11:00 – 2:00

CALL THE OFFICE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER!



AUXILIARY/MOTHERS STUDY

Linda Young
will present her travelogue.

Wednesday, February 15,
1 p.m. in the gallery



Bible Study
everyone is welcome

**MARY MARTHA
BIBLE STUDY**

Tuesday, February 14,
10 a.m. in the library.

We meet monthly on the second Tuesday.

**Bethlehem Veterans'
Monthly Breakfast**

March 3, 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—JANUARY 16 through February 27

Jamie Dylenski is currently teaching a class about the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)

Please come each Monday evening from 7 to 8:30 p.m.
even if you have not attended previously.



"Rebuilding" Rev. John L. Kennedy*(continued from page 1)*

temple anymore, and the Gentiles were not among their other gods anymore. They started a new family and home in Jesus. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus became the bedrock and solid foundation of their community. Little did they realize that the faithful decisions they were making each day were leading to a movement that was changing the world forever. A small church trusting God, following Christ's footsteps of love and peace, was paying off in a movement that was fortifying them in solidarity. They were braver, they were calmer, they were more focused, and they were growing in joy and confidence. They were not fighting the Roman Empire on the empire's terms. They were building a home with the subversive techniques of love, justice, mercy, and humility, and the empire could not stop them.

In Ann Arbor, Jesus has come to Bethlehem! We are hearing Jesus' voice: "Do you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" Because of God's grace to us, Jesus has laid the foundation like an expert builder and now Bethlehem is rebuilding on it. Jesus will never leave our side.

There will always be more storms, but they will not stop our building and growing. We know what real justice, mercy, and humility *do not* look like! We know what real justice, mercy, and humility *do look like*, and we will keep building. We will do it today and tomorrow!

God's courage, grace, and joy, Pastor John

BUCC YOUTH ADVENT PROGRAM 2016



Many thanks to Eileen Koprowski for this great image of our Christmas program at Bethlehem. We hope you had a chance to enjoy the Christmas posters around church. Eileen really captured the spirit of our Christmas festivities.

Thank You

A big thank-you to the following people who helped to "degreen" the church on Saturday, December 31:

Kris and Scott Lovelace; Sue and John Irwin; Brian, Sheila, and Jake Paton; Eric Bower; Jim and Sallie Stadel; Jan and Samantha Eadie; Bob and Michelle Loukotka; Pam Widmayer and Fred Castenholz; Jesse Wilcox; Mike Haab; and Cresson Slotten.

Fellowship Ministry Team chair Jane Ziesemer and her husband, Tom, were unable to assist but knew a wonderful team of people helped with this task. Until next December, have an amazing 2017!

Facilities Ministry Team Needs Our Help

If you see something around Bethlehem 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.

*Thank you to
Mary Jean Raab
and Washtenaw
Dairy for organiz-
ing the recent Red
Cross Blood Drive
at Bethlehem.*



*Did you
know
that
Bethlehem
is a
5 for 5
church?*

Being **5 for 5** is one sign of congregational vitality in UCC churches that fully support Our Church's Wider Mission.

5 for 5 churches give to these five UCC Offerings:

1. **Basic Support** (year-round)
2. **One Great Hour of Sharing** takes place March 26, 2017
3. **Strengthen the Church** takes place June 4, 2017
4. **Neighbors in Need** takes place October 1, 2017
5. **The Christmas Fund** takes place December 24, 2017

*Thank you for
your support!*

3 easy ways to support Bethlehem. All you have to do is shop!

Support Bethlehem through these
Community Rewards Programs

Kroger

Busch's

amazonsmile

- For Kroger rewards, go to Kroger.com, click "Sign In," and follow the directions.
- For Busch's rewards, go to buschs.com, go to your MyWay account, and click the Cash for Education icon.
- For Amazon rewards, shop at smile.amazon.com (see info at right).
- See Bethlehem-ucc.org for complete information.

Welcome to
amazonsmile

You shop. Amazon gives.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to **Bethlehem United Church of Christ** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

You can select a different charitable organization after signing in.

- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.
- Support your charitable organization by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com

Education Ministry Team, Advent Events

Jane Schmerberg, Education Ministry Chair

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Advent Season and Christmas such a wonderful time at Bethlehem. The Children's Advent program, the Advent Potluck & Workshop, and the Advent Mission projects were all great successes.

Our children had a fantastic Christmas play enjoyed by all at the December 11 service directed by Sarah Herwick. The pageant was a creative and energetic way to share the timeless story of Christmas with a modern twist. Thank you to our wonderful youth and the families and volunteers who made this possible.

We also had a joyful time at the Advent Potluck organized by Jan Eadie and our Fellowship Ministry Team. No one went hungry, and we had a chance to make crafts and treats at the Advent Workshop set up by Nancy Pieske with her family and friends. Thank you to everyone.

One of my favorite holiday activities is to deliver the gifts that were collected during the holiday season. Our gifts are so well-received. For our Youth Mission Project we had chosen two groups: Peace Neighborhood Center and Washtenaw Refugee Welcome (WRW). Peace Neighborhood has a wonderful toy drive where families can come and pick up gifts for their children. Washtenaw Refugee Welcome used our donations and hand-picked youth who needed gifts for the holiday season.

Rita Toderan received the gifts for WRW and was thrilled with the thoughtfulness. She welcomes our youth's efforts to help the families of these newly settled refugees who often come with nothing. She has some suggestions for ways that we can make these families feel more welcome and settled in our community. We will continue our efforts and work toward this with another project for the season of Lent. Please let us know if you have some ideas.

The Mitten Tree was loaded with donations. This year we collected more than 400 mittens, hats, and scarves, many of which were lovingly hand-made. These donations went to Peace Neighborhood Center, Hope Clinic, and Washtenaw Refugee Welcome. We had five big laundry-basket-sized tubs filled with toys that got split between Peace and WRW and were delivered on Monday, December 19, in time for the holidays. Tom Ziesemer took another box of warm hats, scarves, and gloves to Hope Clinic, which treats underserved individuals and families.

Thanks also to Eileen Koprowski, who got out her camera and helped to capture these images. We are grateful that she chose to come and help.

**May peace and the love of Christ
warm our hearts in the New Year.**



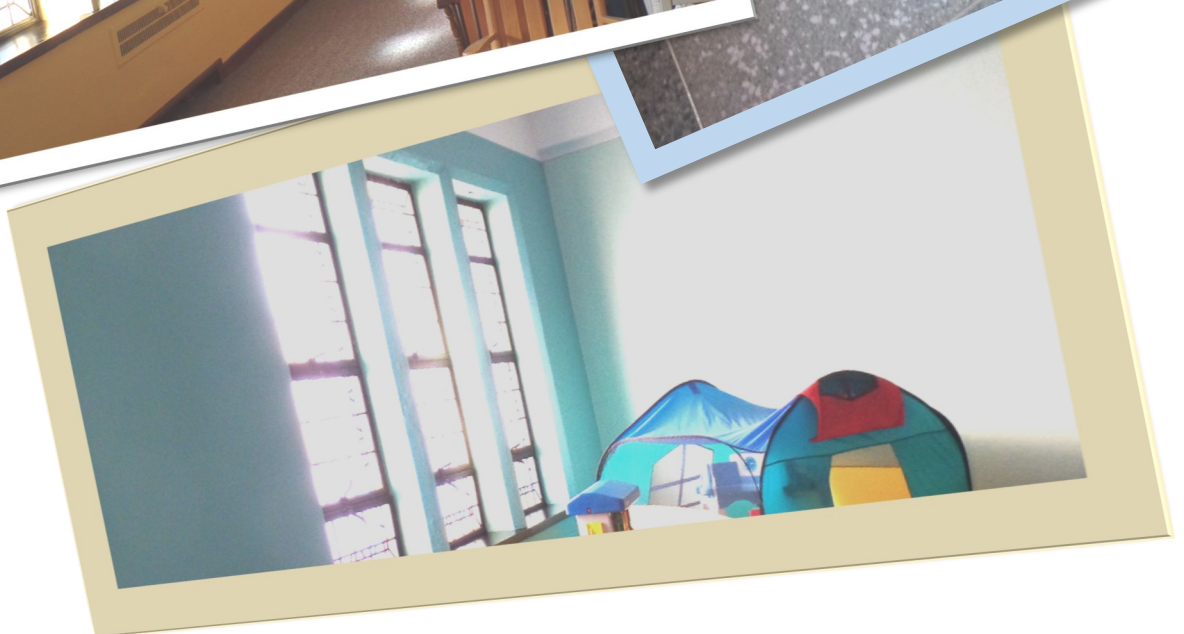
Walk & Talk



Walk & Talk is a monthly outing to a local coffee shop that is

close to church. It is an opportunity for our middle- and high-school youth to get together and talk about anything they choose. We meet in the sanctuary during the 10:00 service and leave after the Children's Moment. Drinks and treats are on us, and friends are welcome. This month we went to Avalon, a great new restaurant just down the street from Bethlehem.

**We are meeting the third Sunday of each month.
The next outing is planned for March 19. Please join us!**

From new fresh paint, to refurbished floors, to big paint jobs in progress, there is lots of spiffing up going on around Bethlehem.



**MARDI GRAS
HOPS & HALLELUJAHS**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
AT CONOR O'NEILL'S**
318 S. Main St., Ann Arbor 665-2968

**Fellowship at 6 p.m.,
Music and Songs from 7 – 8:30 p.m.**

**Featuring: Stevie D. & the Wannabes,
Sarah & Mark Herwick, choir members, and youth group.**

**This event is lightly structured, focused on singing,
with many opportunities for people to share songs that move them,
whether in praise or lament, but always with spirit.**

****Please submit your song recommendations to the office.****

LIVING NATIVITY

HARRIETTE EHNIS

Remember when Bethlehem Church celebrated Advent with a Living Nativity scene on Fourth Avenue? Back by popular demand, we have reserved Ophelia the camel, a donkey, and sheep for a Living Nativity on Friday December 1, 2017. Of course, we will also need Joseph, Mary, a baby, shepherds, angels, and kings to complete the scene. All of this will take some spirited organization, and we want to begin the planning well in advance. This event is uplifting not only to Bethlehem folks but to the wider community as well. Please consider volunteering to support this effort. For further questions or to volunteer, please contact Caroline Ashenfelter, Tom Ziesemer, or any member of the Worship Ministry Team.



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



FOOD GATHERERS COMMUNITY KITCHEN

February 5 and March 5 (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.)

February 28 (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—February 19
(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



MEMORIALS & GIFTS

CURRENT FUND

Ryan Connell Memorial

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Rev. & Mrs. Schmale Memorial

Graham Frye Memorial

Norman & Helen Grob Memorial

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Betty Diuble Memorial

Ron & Julia Kennedy Memorial

Eldean & Lillian Hanson Memorial

Virginia Sivacek Memorial

Lois Haeussler Memorial

Fred & Lela Keppler Memorial

Wilma Wahl Memorial

RADIO FUND

Geraldine Seyfried Memorial

Fritz Kienzle Memorial

Lois Haeussler Memorial

Wilma Wahl Memorial

**Gifts listed were received through
December 31, 2016.**

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Helen Schmale Baumann Memorial

Bill Gilbert Memorial

Kevin Paul Wenk Memorial

Jim Schmale Honorarium

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Ron Gentner Memorial

John Nimz Memorial

**Gifts listed were received through
January 31, 2017.**

RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORSHIPS

December 11

In loving memory of Betty Boman from her sister Marilyn Graham and her niece Judy Graham Burgess.

December 18

Dedicated to Art & Erna Jahnke and Shorty & Mary Jahnke, with love from Karen and Wayne Jahnke.

December 25

In memory of Lois M. Haeussler, Mr. & Mrs. Norman Haeussler, and Mr. & Mrs. Albert Trinkle, from their loving family and friends.

January 22, 2017

In celebration and honor of Cresson Slotten for his 30 years of service at the city of Ann Arbor by his mom, Marie.



DECEMBER 2016 FINANCIALS

Monthly Target	\$ 28,270.00
Received	\$ 48,239.00
YTD Target	\$ 367,500.00
YTD Received	\$ 356,927.00
Difference	(\$10,573.00)

ONA NEWS AND UPDATES

About 40 people stayed after church on January 8 for pizza and a lively presentation by U-M grad student Ben Hollenbach. Ben told stories of U.S. Christians who have bravely supported LGBT+ people. For example, in 1965, Christian ministers in California were arrested when they were guarding the doors of an LGBT+ fundraiser that was raided by police. The clergy later told their story to the media, raising awareness of harassment in gay communities. We thank Ben for his time and talent! Ben explores the role faith plays in putting LGBT+ inclusion into practice. He is conducting his research at mainline Protestant churches in Michigan, including Bethlehem!



ONA Task Force Transitions to Standing Committee



In the fall of 2014, the Leadership Council established the ONA Task Force to lead and facilitate our congregation through the Open and Affirming process. This process, led by the Task Force, was one of discussion, information, engagement, and discernment among the members of Bethlehem UCC. The culmination of these efforts was a vote by the membership on Sunday, May 22, 2016, to declare ourselves an Open and Affirming congregation and to adopt our 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.

Recognizing that the charge of the ONA Task Force has been completed—but as noted in a June 2016 Visitor article following the ONA vote:

Although we have held educational and informational sessions on LGBTQ issues and concerns, we will continue to educate and inform one another...

Although we have held conversations and discussions about what it would mean to become

an ONA congregation, we

will continue to converse and discuss...

Although we have heard from individuals who have been affected in various ways by the reactions and opinions of society and the broader church because of who they are, we will continue to listen and hear from those who are marginalized and cast aside by others...

Our journey will continue. God is still speaking here at Bethlehem UCC!

On December 13, 2016, the Leadership Council passed a motion to create an Open and Affirming Standing Committee to review, discuss, and assess progress and programs related to fulfilling our Covenant of Welcome. The committee will be made up of representatives from our various ministry teams—including Education, Outreach, Fellowship, Welcome, and Youth and Young Adult—and plans to meet quarterly. Representatives from the Finance and Facilities teams will be included on the committee if deemed necessary. To form the initial committee, many members of the ONA Task Force, particularly those already on ministry teams, will participate, along with additional volunteers.

So, moving forward, look for reports and information from the ONA Standing Committee. Our efforts of welcome are ongoing. We would be delighted to have any “members at large” join the ONA committee. **Please contact Patti Maki if you are interested in this important ministry:** pattimaki@aol.com, 734-646-0389.

Covenant of Welcome

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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,
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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
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.