

The Visitor

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

March 2017

an invitation to grow in spirit and serve with joy



LENTEN JOURNEY

“What’s in Your Wilderness?”

Rev. John L. Kennedy

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him...
—*Matthew 4*

What’s in your wilderness? During Lent we are invited to journey into our wilderness places. Some translations say that Jesus was led into the desert, but the actual word is “wilderness.” Our wilderness experiences are not all the same. A true wilderness must feel like a deserted place: uninhabitable, untamed, unpredictable, and a place of aban-

donment, not like what we call “wilderness adventures,” where we “get away from it all” and return refreshed and renewed. On these journeys we go with supplies that provide all we need and in fact probably include many amenities and comforts. So what’s in your true wilderness? Where and when do you feel stressed, torn, conflicted, and low on resources?

What was in Jesus’ wilderness? Jesus, following his baptism, is led into the wilderness to be tested by the “accuser.” He has



nothing—no supplies, no food, no water, no protective clothing, no bedding, and no company. There is no one coming to ease his struggle. Jesus’ baptism was the first time there was any indication that Jesus understood his identity and what his calling would be, and then the devil hits him right between the eyes. The devil says, “***If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.***” He knows Jesus is hungry, exhausted, and vulnerable, and asks him if he even knows who he is anymore

(continued on page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE

Rev. John Kennedy	Page 1	Education Lenten Project	Page 6	Memorials and Gifts	Page 10
Leadership Report	Page 2	Refugee Welcome letter	Page 6	Parish Records	Page 10
Upcoming Events	Page 3	Stone Soup	Page 8	Thank you	Page 10
Church History Event	Page 3	Palm Sunday Brunch	Page 8	February Financials	Page 10
Easter Flower news	Page 4	Help Wanted	Page 8	Transgender Visibility Day	Page 11
Hops and Hallelujahs	Page 5	Outreach	Page 9	Pardon our Progress	Page 11

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL AND MINISTRY TEAMS

We are only two months into the New Year, and already Leadership Council (LC) and the ministry teams are busy and working hard.

We welcome new Leadership Council vice-president Ron Dechert and new member-at-large Judy Coucouvanis and appreciate their willingness to volunteer their time. Both are already enthusiastically contributing in these church leadership roles.

Each year Leadership Council members choose to sit in on Bethlehem ministry teams and act as liaisons to better facilitate communication.

We encourage all members of our church to consider volunteering for one of these important ministry teams. Both long-term and shorter-term commitments are welcome.



Contact the chair of one of these groups to volunteer. Below is a list of the chairs for each group along with the LC liaisons.

Leadership Council members are excited about the coming year and all the work being done. New members are joining, our church building is being improved, and our programming is becoming focused and rich.

These are all blessings!

Ministry Team	Chair	LC Liaison
Education	Jane Schmerberg	Karen Samford
Facilities	Steve Darr	Ron Dechert
Fellowship	Kris Lovelace	Jane Ziesemer
Finance	Jeff Wortman	Shannon O'Reilly
Outreach	Laura Seyfried	Sue Wortman
Welcome	Kurt Schmerberg	Kris Lovelace
Worship	Caroline Ashenfelter	Sue Buday
Member Care	Jan Burnham	Judy Coucouvanis

April Visitor Deadline



**Deadline
to submit
articles and
photos is
March 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

**Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 12 – Spring Forward!**

*Community Outreach
Opportunities
are detailed on page 9.*

MARCH PRETZEL SALES

Holy Rollers

March 11, 10:30 – 12:00

March 12, after each service

Parking Lot Pretzels

March 31, 11:00 – 2:00

CALL THE OFFICE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER!



Bible Study

MARY MARTHA BIBLE STUDY

Tuesday, March 14,
10:00 a.m. in the library

AUXILIARY/MOTHERS STUDY

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

Featuring
a small concert
by Gail Jennings



WALK & TALK, March 19, 10 a.m.

Middle- and high-school youth and teachers are invited to walk downtown together to a local restaurant after the Children's Moment for a snack or drink. We will pick up the tab.



MARY MARTHA BIBLE STUDY

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

We meet monthly on the second Tuesday.

FRESH PRODUCE COLLECTION FOR FOOD GATHERERS SUNDAY, MARCH 19

(every third Sunday until spring)



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

Bethlehem Veterans' Monthly Breakfast

April 7, 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.



Interested in local history? See what is happening April 5th

On Wednesday, April 5 from 12-1, Barbara Foster will speak at the Kempf House historical museum located at 312 S. Division in Ann Arbor. The subject is Pastor Frederick Schmid, who was sent in 1833 as a missionary from Basel, Switzerland, to the German settlers in southeast, Michigan. **Walking or traveling by horseback, he founded about 20 churches including Zion and Bethlehem in Ann Arbor.**

Some music familiar to German pioneers in the mid 1800's will also be performed. Kempf House, built in 1853, was home to a German-American musical family. There is a Steinway Concert grand piano from 1877 and an Allmendinger pump organ.



"What's in Your Wilderness?" Rev. John L. Kennedy*(continued from page 1)*

(the devil always knows how to hit us where we are most vulnerable). **But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** Jesus remembers who he is even when he is vulnerable. He remembers that he is "God's Beloved Son," and he will not allow even his hunger to redirect his purpose.

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will or-

der his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" Jerusa-

lem is the site of the Jewish Temple, which is on the same site as

Solomon's former temple. The temple represents the law. Perhaps Jesus knows what a long road he has in front of him; the strong powers plotting and fighting against him. Maybe he senses the suffering he will endure. Perhaps it would be easier to end it all early rather than risk being betrayed and crucified. But instead, **Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'"**

Again, Jesus refuses to allow the devil's scare



tactics to detour him from his faithfulness to God's plan. He knows escaping the pain will mean missing the power of God's love to conquer all things.

Next the devil took Jesus to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

Power can be intoxicating, but Jesus is not interested in leading any human power structure. He knows the devil deals in deception and offers only power that is fleeting. Jesus does not need the ap-

proval of others, or in any other power other than God's. **"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him.**

"For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'" Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

Three times Jesus is tempted, and twice the devil quotes Scripture, but Jesus hangs on to his identity by remembering the identity of

God. God does not tempt us. God does not subject us to pass or fail tests. God does not offer us dead-end deals and booby-trapped gifts. God does not play games, coerce, or play mind-games with our identity. God offers strength even in the wild. Especially in our wild and scary places.

What is in your wilderness? God is!

God's grace, Pastor John

Coming soon . . .

Easter Flower sign-up sheet

Easter morning is a nice time to honor or remember a loved one with flowers or a special donation to a church fund. The order forms will be available soon.



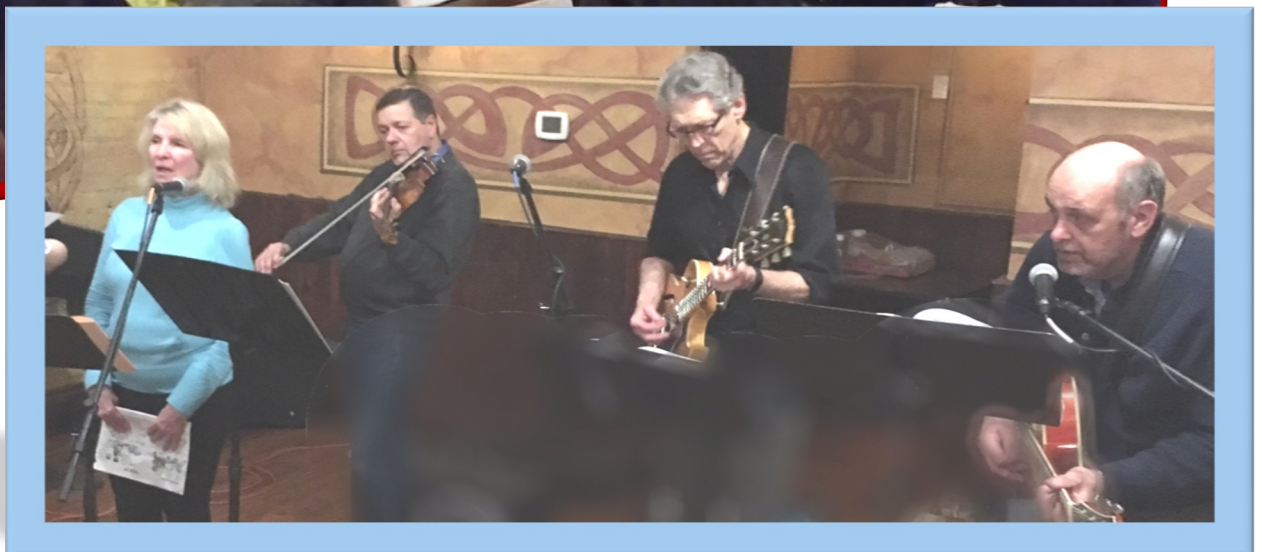
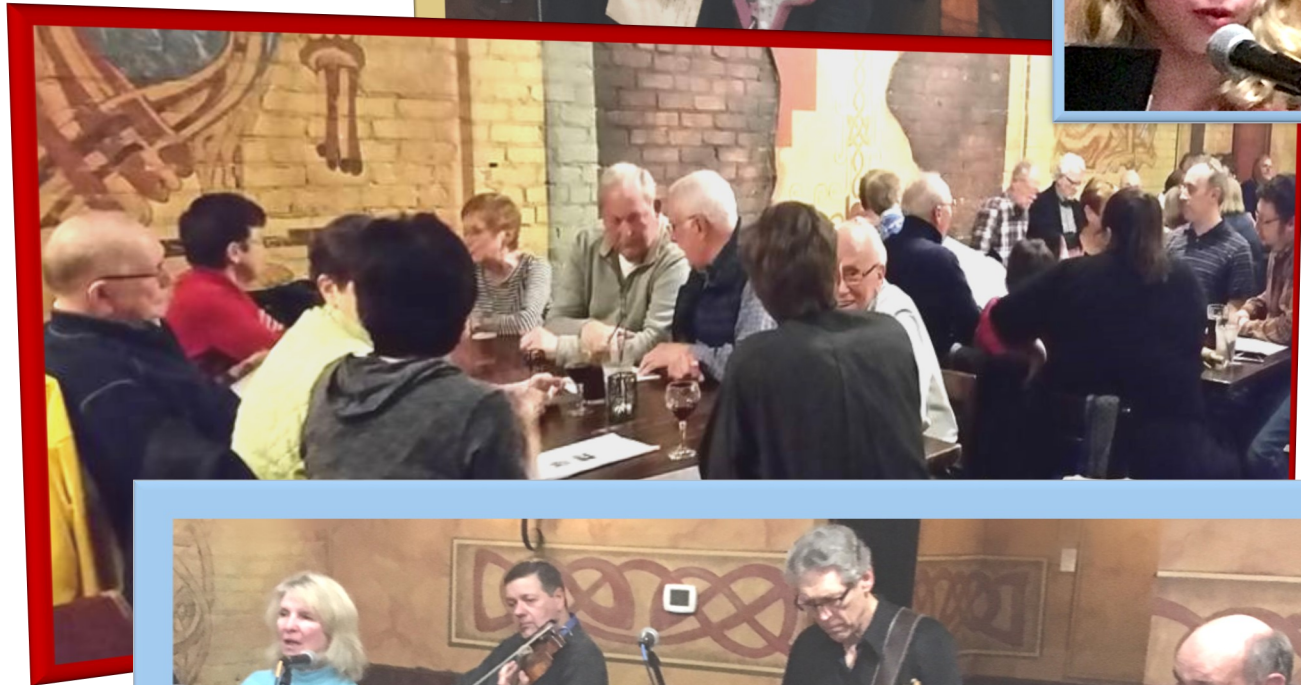
HOPS AND HALLELUJAHS THANK YOU

Jane Ziesemer, Fellowship

I would like to thank Tom Ziesemer for organizing another successful Hops and Hallelujahs on Tuesday, February 28. There were 70 people in attendance. Thank you Stevie D and the Wannabes for playing for us once again and Mary Ann Folk for singing along with the band.

Special thanks to Sara Herwick, first for organizing the youth and second for providing several duets along side her brother-in-law, Mark. It was so nice having so many youth present singing as a group and solos.

***Thank you one and all
for helping make this a
wonderful, feel good event.
A great way to usher in Lent.***





Education Ministry Team Lenten Mission Project Washtenaw Refugee Welcome

Washtenaw Refugee Welcome (WRW) is a local organization that helps support refugees and their families once they are settled into our county. The highly vetted refugee families receive 90 days of assistance before they must be completely self-sufficient. WRW helps them get into housing and provides donated furniture, clothing, household goods, etc. Some of our toys and things from the Mitten Tree went to refugees who were tremendously grateful. The families are from around the world. We have a few things we want to do to support WRW.

1. **One goal is monetary support.** WRW donations give the refugee families help with unexpected costs and emergencies. We will try to collect money with a Lenten offering. We will ask youth and adults to contribute to our collection jar during the season of Lent. We are also planning some fundraising activities that might include donations from the



Palm Sunday brunch, Easter cookie sales (youth to frost and sell on Palm Sunday), and our **Stone Soup Sunday on March 26**

2. **We are collecting shirts and T-shirts.** The director of WRW suggested that the



refugees want a sense of belonging to their new home and an ability to say where home now is. We are going to try to collect *gently* used and new shirts that have **local logos** on them, like *Ann Arbor, Washtenaw, Michigan, Great Lakes State*, etc. That way they can have some shirts to show their local pride. It is okay to have things that say University of Michigan, but sports logos, like the block M, for example, might not quite get the point across. Nonetheless, all donations will be welcome. All sizes are welcome. The youth will have a collection box in the library.

3. **We are collecting used bicycles.** WRW notes that transportation is a challenge for new refugees. Affordable housing is often far from the city center and



not even on bus lines. WRW is asking for donations of used bikes for all ages. They will be refurbished and donated to the families that need them.

**Helping refugees is part of the work that God wants us to do.
During Lent, let's all work together to welcome the stranger.
Washtenaw Refugee Welcome gives us a way to do this.**

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. —Hebrews 13:2

*The parable about the sheep and the goats includes this passage:
"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." —Matthew 25:31-46*

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:17-19

Remember, too, that Jesus and his family were refugees in Egypt.

Upcoming Dates for BUCC Youth

SUNDAY, MARCH 12:
Bibles given to our upper elementary youth during church.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19:
Walk & Talk for middle- and high-school youth.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 9,
Palm Sunday:**
All hands on deck!
We need all ages of children to help. We will start with the Procession of Palms in the service. Then the youth will come downstairs for Easter cookie decoration. We will be selling the cookies during the all-church Palm Sunday Brunch. There will also be hard-boiled eggs to color.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 16,
Easter Sunday:**
No Walk & Talk

SUNDAY, APRIL 30
Walk & Talk for middle- and high-school youth.

**Thank-you letter
from Rita Toderon
of Washtenaw
Refugee Welcome (WRW)**

In December, Bethlehem delivered toys from our Advent project and collections from the Mitten Tree. We received this lovely thank-you:



I have wanted to share with your congregation what a wonderful response refugees had to the incredibly generous gifts you collected for them. They went to new Americans from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria. The toys were a tremendous success for all ages of children. The beautiful handmade knitted items delighted the women, and the men appreciate the snug caps. Please let everyone know that the refugee families are very grateful. They know there are many people in the community who care about them, and that means so much. As one young man said, "I don't know how to appreciate you enough in English!" And from another family: "I thank you sooo much for everything you have done for us, I got the gifts you sent me, you have done a lot for us. To be honest you are more like angels to us. We appreciate every single thing you, and all of your community, have done. Wish you all the best, happiness, blessings, peace and all the good things in the world for you. Please thank all of the community for their kind help. God bless you all!"

WRW has been able to provide food, furnishings, and clothing, but it is humbling to realize the countless obstacles refugee families face in trying to establish new lives. The low-income jobs they were able to get during the 90 days of agency assistance are inadequate and unstable. One unforeseen problem is enough to send a family into desperate circumstances. We spent December and January flooded with situations like that.

Now, of course, the world has changed. There is a lot of fear and uncertainty. No new refugees will be allowed to come to the U.S. until approximately June. Resettlement agencies are pulling back and cutting staff.

The number of refugees that America will accept has been cut by half. WRW remains committed to supporting refugees who are already here and supporting efforts to spread information and compassion in our community.

As we learn more, we will post information on our website:

www.washtenawrefugeewelcome.org

Your question about using money to help refugees is very timely. I mentioned above how easily disrupted things can get for the refugees. Winter heating bills have forced some families to give up car insurance, and now they are back to walking through the snow to bus stops and waiting in the cold. This week we were able to help one family stretch their budget and get insurance again. They emailed me from the insurance office to thank WRW. The cars that so few families can even afford are old and break down often. They can't afford repairs and have lost jobs because they can't get to work. Another problem is not being able to afford driving lessons and fees to get driver licenses. Thus, they are limited to only those jobs within walking distance or by bus. One refugee without a car has to walk and take several buses; it takes him 3 hours to get to work on the west side of Ann Arbor from where he's placed in Ypsilanti.

And that's just transportation. I could go on and on about health problems, job loss, benefits cut off, etc. Having even a small amount of emergency funds to help a family through a period of crisis would be a Godsend! I've seen the enormous impact that can have. Your congregation would change lives, I can assure you.

Thank you for the work you are doing at all levels of your congregation. Your efforts will help keep people from falling through the cracks. It's especially wonderful that you are helping your young people to value compassion for their neighbors during this time when voices are raised against "the other."

PALM SUNDAY BRUNCH

Palm Sunday, April 9, will be here before you know it, and you don't want to miss the brunch following the 10:00 service sponsored by the Fellowship Ministry Team.

If you are an 8:30 worshiper, we would love to have you come back and join us for brunch!

This is a potluck, so please sign up outside the office. There will be simple table games for all ages, such as a word search, while you enjoy brunch.

A freewill offering will go toward supporting the Sunday School Lenten Mission Project for Washtenaw Refugee Welcome.

—Jane Zieseemer

Palm Sunday Potluck Brunch



APRIL 9
FOLLOWING THE
10:00 AM WORSHIP SERVICE

Sign up sheet on the bulletin board
by the Church Office
for food needed for the Brunch.

All proceeds go to the SCS Lenten Project:
Washtenaw Refugee Welcome

STONE SOUP LENTEN FUNDRAISER

March 26 - After the 10 a.m. Worship Service

All proceeds go to the "Washtenaw Refugee Welcome" Lenten Project



"Stone Soup" is a folk story in which hungry strangers convince the people of a town to each share a small amount of their food in order to make a meal that everyone enjoys.

Watch for the sign-up sheet coming soon, and plan to bring *your* Stone Soup item, so that we can all enjoy a meal together, and for a great cause.



GARDENER: Bethlehem Church is looking for Church Gardeners. Needed are 1-2 people who can purchase flowers for the church grounds, and organize a spring planting day and a watering/weeding schedule.

HANDY-PERSON: The church is in need of a handy-person on an occasional contract basis to do repairs around the church and grounds. If you have a recommendation or a referral, please contact the office.

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

FOOD GATHERERS COMMUNITY KITCHEN

April 2 (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.)

March 28 (fourth Tuesday of each month, 2:30–4:45 p.m.)

(see info below)

FOOD GATHERERS FOOD BARREL

Place nonperishable food items in the food barrel in the library.



FRESH PRODUCE COLLECTION FOR FOOD GATHERERS—March 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

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Larry Marshall Memorial
Rev. and Mrs. Schmale Memorial

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Wilbert Diuble Memorial
Sandy Dotson Memorial
Bill Fellenberger Memorial
Hilda McLaughlin Memorial
John O'Reilly Memorial

RADIO FUND

Margaret Keppler Deverick Memorial
Larry Marshall Memorial

YOUTH PROGRAM

Larry Marshall Memorial

*Gifts listed were received through
February 28, 2017*

*In
Loving
Memory
of*

RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORSHIPS

FEBRUARY 19

Sponsored by **Karen Scherdt Moore and Barbara Scherdt Hoppe**, in loving memory of their parents and grandparents: **Stanley and Betty Scherdt, Erwin and Lucille Scherdt,** and **Edward and Lenore Scherdt.**



PARISH RECORDS

DEATHS

Larry Marshall - February 12, 2017

Virginia Seitz - February 28, 2017



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to the following people who came to church on Friday, February 17 and put the Sanctuary back together after the big sanctuary painting:

Eric Bower
Erich Santifer
Scott Lovelace
Brian and Sue Buday
Mike Haab
Dave Gilmore
Matt Perros
Sally and Jim Stadel
Roy Muir
Bob Loukotka



FEBRUARY 2017 FINANCIALS

Monthly Target	\$26,264.00
Received	\$27,294.97
YTD Target	\$59,094.00
YTD Received	\$52,262.44
Difference	\$(6,831.56)

SUPPORT DIVERSITY IN OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY



March 31 is the International Transgender Day of Visibility

Founded in 2009 by Detroit's own Rachel Crandall, a transgender activist and psychotherapist, the day was established to celebrate transgender people who are living and working among us.

People of gender variance have always existed but have often lived in secrecy for fear of being discovered and rejected by family, friends, and religious leaders. The annual Transgender Day of Visibility can be a joyful coming-out time for formerly closeted members of the transgender community. It is an opportunity for all of us to recognize and honor the contributions of our gender variant friends and neighbors.

From the ONA Standing Committee, via Bethlehem member Nancy Quay, who has worked with transgender people in her psychotherapy practice since 1997

Pardon our PROGRESS

The Facilities Ministry Team began 2017 with several improvements. As you are aware, our sanctuary and balcony landing were repaired and painted. Todd Tribble and his team did a great job handling this project in a caring and timely fashion. We would like to thank all those who took part in setting up and taking down our temporary worship area in the fellowship hall.

We've added lighting to the east parking lot and painted the nursery and preschool room—big thanks to Randy Schneider and Rick Leyshock (husband of Carol Leyshock). We have ordered new ceiling lights for both of these rooms. John Irwin is leading the team with potential building-insurance bids. The parsonage upgrades are nearly finished, and the Fourth Ave house has been cleaned and painted. The Fourth Ave ladies' room renovation is almost complete, and we thank Kris Lovelace for her hard work in accomplishing this.

Jim Stadel has taken care of several needs inside and outside of the building. Our thanks to members of the congregation who assisted Jim with the following:

- Repaired leaky pipes in the pantry and chair/table closet.
- Replaced burned out lights in the hallways, classrooms, sanctuary, and gym.
- Replaced signs in the parking lot.
- Replaced bathroom faucets, toilets, and fixtures.
- Drained the boiler and added softeners.
- Cleaned and torqued the big fan.
- Replaced batteries in detectors/alarms.
- Set up for events and rentals.
- And many more miscellaneous requests.

Scott Lovelace has done a great job compiling needs, suggestions, and upgrades from the congregation in order to build a Capital Projects list. Thank you to Steve Darr, John Irwin, and Carol Leyshock for their leadership.

Tom Zieseimer, Chair, Facilities Ministry

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
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.