

# Bethlehem United Church of Christ

## The Visitor

December  
2017



Living Nativity, presented at Bethlehem Church by Bethlehem members and friends, December 1, 2017

## “Choices of Hope”

Rev. John Kennedy

**This is how Jesus the Messiah was born.** His mother, **Mary**, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Joseph**, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an **angel** of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “**Joseph, son of David,**” the angel said, “**do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.** For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have

a son, and you are to **name him Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.” All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give **birth to a son**, and they will call him **Immanuel**, which means ‘**God is with us.**’” When **Joseph** woke up, he **did as the angel of the Lord commanded** and took **Mary** as his wife...and **Joseph** named him **Jesus**.

—Matthew 1:18-25

Despite the most unlikely characters and conditions the Christ Child, Jesus, enters into our world. God works this miracle via an unmarried pregnant Jewish teenage girl named Mary.

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## Submission Deadline

Articles and photos need to be submitted by

Wednesday, January 10,  
in order to be published in the  
**Mid-January Visitor.**



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**[www.bethlehem-ucc.org](http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org)**  
**[www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2](https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2)**

**HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS AND VACATIONS**

**Dec. 25–26** Church office closed (please note these hours if you plan to bring your end-of-year pledges to the church office)  
**Dec. 27–29** Carol Leyshock out of office  
**Jan. 2** Church office closed



**CHRISTMAS EVE  
 AT BETHLEHEM  
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24  
 PLEASE JOIN US!**

**10:00 AM CHRISTMAS MORNING SERVICE**

**5:00 PM A FAMILY CHRISTMAS SERVICE**  
 Lessons & carols, candle lighting,  
 with an interactive Christmas story

**7:30 PM A CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS**  
 A musical celebration featuring Bethlehem  
 Chancel Choir, Bethlehem Strings, and Solid  
 Brass (starting at 7 p.m.)

**11:00 PM A CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS**  
 Communion, candle lighting, and harpist

**NATIVITY DISPLAYS  
 IN THE SCHMALE  
 LOUNGE**

Once again, the glass cases in the Schmale Lounge showcase nativity sets or crèches throughout December. Please stop by anytime and check out the wonderful collection of nativities. There are all shapes and sizes!



**BLUE CHRISTMAS**

an evening of worship for those experiencing  
 grief and sadness this Christmas season



**Blue Christmas Service  
 at Bethlehem  
 Thursday, Dec. 14,  
 7:00 p.m.**

*Worship for  
 those experiencing  
 grief and sadness  
 this Christmas season.*

*Gift giving, family traditions, nativity scenes, good food—there is much to look forward to at Christmas time. However, this time of year can also be lonely, painful, and sorrowful when you have suffered loss or are experiencing grief, sadness, or depression.*

*Jesus came to comfort us at times like these.*

***Please join us for Blue Christmas at Bethlehem Church, Thursday, December 14, at 7:00 p.m.***

# THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS Lily Tinker Fortel

Over Thanksgiving, thanks to the recommendation of several of Bethlehem's children and teens, I had the sincere pleasure of meeting August Pullman, a 10-year-old boy from Manhattan. August, or Auggie, as he is more commonly known, is the fictional main character of R.J. Palacio's 2012 book-turned-movie, *Wonder*. Perhaps you, too, have had the opportunity to meet him. The story of Auggie's first year in school is gripping and powerful. It's no wonder to me that *Wonder* became a movie. I haven't yet seen August on the big screen, but I hear his story is as compelling there as it is on paper.

Now, I'm not a big fan of spoilers, so I'll do my best to avoid any significant plot reveals. Auggie was born with "craniofacial differences," or "extreme facial abnormalities." In *Wonder*, after being home-schooled his whole life, he is beginning his first year in school as a fifth grader. "I won't describe what I look like," Auggie writes in the first paragraphs of *Wonder*. "Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse." The story of Auggie's first year in school is told through the perspectives of several characters who are central to Auggie's fifth grade experience.

*(Continued on page 6)*



## THE BETHLEHEM LIBRARY MORE BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR SALE

By Dindy Haab

Have you checked out the selection of books recently in our library? Winter is coming, so take advantage of the new selections to fill the long, cold days ahead. We shelved a bunch of different books and cleaned out many of the old books. We add and reshel books every month. We have young reader and children's picture books, too.

There are even a few LARGE PRINT books and Audiobooks that are located on top of the bookcase toward the back of the room on the left side.

The youth books and the children's books are located on the right side of the room. They are arranged from bottom to top in order of reading ability. Young children's books are on the bottom shelves. Independent readers' books and young adult books advance upward.

**So as winter sets in or you want to find a stocking stuffer, come to the library. Books make great gifts, and at \$1 each, our books are a bargain that can't be beat! COME CHECK IT OUT!!**

amazon smile



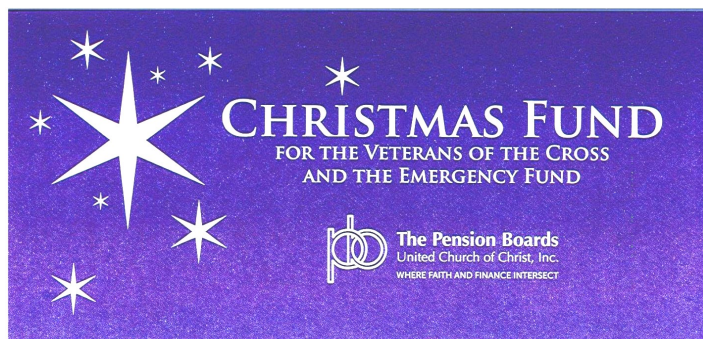
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## AMAZON SMILE

DID YOU KNOW that Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Bethlehem whenever you shop on AmazonSmile? Just Google Amazon Smile and then sign into your Amazon account and Bethlehem gets \$\$ rewards for your purchases.

## UCC Annual Christmas Fund Mission Offering.

In December, we take part in our final 5 for 5 offering of the year. This special giving 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. The envelopes will be placed in your bulletin. Thank you.





(Continued from page 1) **"Choices of Hope"**  
**Rev. John Kennedy**

What is Mary feeling as she is telling her fiancé, Joseph, that she is pregnant? As Mary is telling Joseph, "I'm pregnant," what is Joseph, feeling and thinking? Joseph is also a devout Palestinian Jew, and it is important for him to pattern his life on his faith. He is asking many questions about what his tradition and the sacred scrolls of the Torah recommend as his options and responsibilities. Joseph chooses to follow God's Holy Spirit, which seems to be at odds with what the Jewish law says he should do. Joseph and Mary both choose hope and are moving forward in the direction of the new thing God is doing!

The entire story of Jesus' birth is full of people choosing Hope over doubt and fear; Zechariah and Elizabeth become the parents of John the Baptist even though they are far beyond child-bearing years. The Magi risk much and travel for months with the Hope that they might find the Christ Child. They defy Herod by refusing to reveal where Jesus is located, thereby saving Jesus' life so that he may grow to fulfill God's purpose. All of these "players" in the story, Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the Magi, and the shepherds, are all mere mortals, no greater or lesser than you or I. And they accomplished God's purpose by hoping, trusting, and following during impossible times of violence, war, hunger, and fear. This is how it always is when we follow God in Hope. God, always does great things when the conditions are less than ideal; when there

are significant obstacles; when resources seem less than the needs; and when people are caught in a tug-of-war over following the new thing God is doing, or choosing doubt, fear, cynicism, and circling the wagons in a self-protective mode. Fear is very powerful, but in HOPE are our miracles, God's miracles!

Christ is coming to Bethlehem this Christmas, and we will welcome Christ by choosing Hope! God's plans and promises are always more powerful than our fears. Fear is conquered by Hope, and we can never wait until we are unafraid, because without fear there is no need for Hope. Hope is always something that proves itself in times of vulnerability and fear, always! And people will flock to Hope!



Merry Christmas!  
 God loves you with no take-backs!  
*Pastor John*

**NEW  
 TESTAMENT  
 CLASS  
 STARTING UP  
 IN JANUARY**

COME JOIN OUR  
**BIBLE**  
 Study



Jamie Dylenski will be teaching  
 a New Testament class  
 starting in January.

**Plan now to be a part of this class**  
**Monday evenings in the lounge**  
**from 7:00–8:30 p.m.**  
**January 8 through February 26.**

**Mark your calendars for these 2018 events!**

**New Testament Class**

January 8–February 26 at 7:00 p.m.

**ONA Open and Affirming presentation**

January 21 at 11:15 a.m. (see page 11 for details)

**Evening Worship in the Chapel**

January 24 and February 28 at 6 p.m.

**Family Friday Fun Nights**

January 26, February 23, March 23 at 6 p.m.

**Red Cross Blood Drive at Bethlehem**

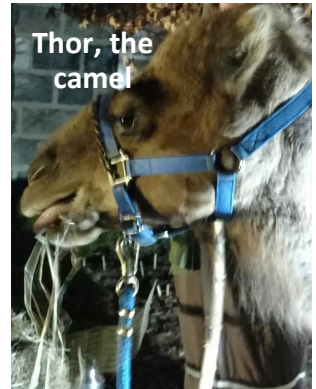
January 27 from 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

800-733-2767 to schedule your appointment



# DID YOU COME TO BETHLEHEM AND SEE?

Did you come to Bethlehem on Friday night, December 1, and see our amazing Living Nativity? It was truly a blessing to behold. We are so grateful to Tom Ziesemer and George Pritchett for organizing this awesome event. We need to thank SO MANY for making the evening possible. Thank you for taking part in the Bethlehem UCC Living Nativity and for sharing your time and talent with the greater community.



SUPPORT STAFF	CAST	WELCOME BAGS
Harriette Ehnis (script)	Camille Konrad	Welcome Ministry:
Jane Schmerberg	CJ Slotten	Kurt Schmerberg
Dindy Haab	Chloe Schmerberg	Paul Marshall
Shannon O'Reilly (costumes)	Jan Eadie	Barb Marshall
Pat O'Reilly (costumes)	Julia Kennedy	<b>READERS</b>
Kathy Warner	John Matthew Kennedy	Patti Maki
Julie Feldkamp	Mike Ehnis	Jennifer Vasquez
Eileen Koprowski (photos)	John Irwin	<b>CHOIR</b>
Karen Samford	Christina Wilk	John Samford
Jim Stadel (sound)	Tom Krell	Sarah Herwick
Brian Buday	Logan Wilk-Krell	Karen Kennedy
Caroline Ashenfelter	Mike Haab	Sue Wortman
Lily Tinker Fortel (advertising)	Dave Gilmore	Sue Muir
Gary Rogers (advertising)	Marty Seyfried	Angelika Lewis
Rev. John Kennedy	<b>BAND</b>	Ele Kotowski
Jan Burnham	Steve Darr	Michelle Loukotka
<b>PARKING LOT ATTENDANTS</b>	Gordie Darr	Gretchen Korzuck
Scott Lovelace	EJ Vasquez	Linda Young
Kris Lovelace	Abby Bowers	Harriette Ehnis
Jim Judson	<b>HOT CHOCOLATE</b>	<b>PRETZELS</b>
Fred Castenholz	Fellowship Ministry:	Holy Rollers
Pam Widmayer	Jane Ziesemer	Parking Lot Pretzels
	Susan Irwin	



**A BIG thank-you to the following folks who helped with decorating preparations on Thursday, November 30, and who decorated our beautiful church Saturday, December 2.**

## Hanging of the Greens

Abby Bowers	Emma Marx	Kurt Schmerberg
Bob Loukotka	Fred Castenholz	Lily Tinker Fortel
Brian Paton	Gary Bengtson	Michelle Loukotka
Bryce Hilberer	Jan Eadie	Mike Haab
Brynn Hilberer	Jane Ziesemer	Pam Widmayer
Camille Konrad	Jennifer Vasquez	Roy Muir
Chloe Schmerberg	Jim Stadel	Ryleigh Jaworski
CJ Slotten	John Irwin	Sallie Stadel
Cresson Slotten	Julie Feldkamp	Scott Lovelace
Dave Gilmore	Kathy Marx	Sue Muir
David Hilberer	Kathy Warner	Tom Ziesemer
Debbie Belcher	Kris Lovelace	

(Continued from page 3)

## The Wonder of Christmas, Lily Tinker Fortel

I believe the story of Auggie Pullman is so gripping because it invites us to explore our own lives, whatever age we are. It invites us to examine how we treat others and inspires us to navigate life's difficulties with the courage we see in Auggie. As I dove into Palacio's *Auggie & Me*, the 2015 supplement (not sequel) to *Wonder*, I was struck with this quote:

"Know you what it is to be a child? It is to be something very different from the man of today. It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of baptism; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul; it is to live in a nutshell and to count yourself the king of infinite space." —Francis Thompson, "Shelley," as quoted in *Auggie & Me*.

This quote reminded me of Jesus. Jesus, the Christ child, whom we celebrate this month. And Jesus, the man, who inspired the Christian faith. Somehow, Jesus managed to keep the "spirit yet streaming," the belief in love and loveliness, and the "belief in belief," alive throughout his life. In the midst of a society laden with oppressive power structures and unjust societal realities, Jesus professed a vision of a world that still seems so far from reach: a world where unjust power structures will be dismantled, where love prevails, where justice, equity, and peace become lived realities for all. To some, these visions might be dismissible as fairy tales, the imaginings of a child not grounded in reality. But to us, the realization of "Heaven on Earth" is something we pray for weekly as we recite the Lord's Prayer. All who aspire to follow the example of Jesus are compelled to act for justice, peace, and equity in our daily lives.



In ways not too dissimilar from the life of Auggie Pullman, the Christmas narrative—Jesus' birth story—reminds us that Jesus was the most unlikely of people to bring that message. Jesus was born among the livestock, with a bed of straw. He was outcast and exiled by the rulers in power, before he even took in his first breaths of air, because of circumstances beyond his control. Just like Auggie, this month's blockbuster hero, Jesus reminds us that we all have a role to play in bringing about the world we envision.

At the end of *Wonder*, Mr. Tushman, the headmaster of Auggie's school, quotes Christian abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher: "Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength...He is the greatest, whose strength carries up the most hearts by the attraction of his own." Similar to Auggie's story in *Wonder*, the Christmas season—the story of Jesus—is a story of carrying up hearts.

On November 27, several Bethlehem members had the joy of hearing Congressman John Lewis speak at Hill Auditorium. During the Q&A, Congressman Lewis spoke about his faith: "I come from a religious background, and I happen to believe that there is a spark of the Divine in all of us. We are not ordained (we do not have the right) to abuse the spark in others." My faith background, and I suspect this is similar to yours, reminds me that we *are* ordained and compelled to honor and celebrate that spark of the Divine in ourselves and in others.

My wish for us this Christmas season is that we relish the wonder of the simple and profound reality that Jesus' birth and life profess: the Divine is in us all, even—especially—in people society deems most unlikely. The Wonder is within, among, and all around us. Mysteriously, it is as close as our very breath, and as far as the greatest reaches of the galaxy. May we experience that wonder and mystery as children, and may we honor it in ourselves, in all people, and in our universe.

Merry Christmas, Dear Bethlehem!

"What I want you, my students, to take away from your middle-school experience, is the sure knowledge that, in the future you make for yourselves, anything is possible. If every single person in this room made a rule that wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary—the world really would be a better place. And if you do this, if you act just a little kinder than is necessary, someone else, somewhere, someday, may recognize in you, in every single one of you, the face of God." —Mr. Tushman, in *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio



# Spiritual Growth and Development & Youth Group Lily Tinker Fortel

## November Highlights

### 21-Day Meditation Experience

Thanks to all who participated in the latest 21-Day Meditation Experience with Oprah and Deepak Chopra! The theme was *Making Every Moment Matter*. Participants took part in a 20-minute daily meditation exercise (for the most part!), and we checked in by phone and email to discuss the experience.

### Youth Group



Our Youth Group theme for November was *gratitude* as a spiritual practice. The youth participated in an epic scavenger hunt to find the gratitude journals. Many have been keeping note of things for which they are grateful throughout the month!

Hops and Hallelujahs! It was wonderful to see Youth Group member Abby Bowers perform at Bethlehem's Hops and Hallelujahs on November 1. Way to go, Abby!



We continued working on our Christmas fundraiser!!

Look for our wonderful hand-made mugs with delicious hot cocoa mix during the Advent Workshop and, while supplies last, other fellowship hours in December.



Youth Group outing! Several of us went to see EJ and Ellie Vasquez perform in *Ham and Eggs with Danish* at Rudolf Steiner High School. A fun time was had by all!! Great job, Ellie and EJ!



### Rep. John Lewis

Several Bethlehem members had the great joy of hearing Congressman John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell discuss their graphic novel trilogy, *March*, on Monday, November 27!

It was inspiring to hear insights and wisdom from each of these men—and to hear Congressman Lewis talk about his experiences in the civil rights movement, his unwavering commitment to nonviolence as a means to social change, and his belief that all of us have a role to play in bringing about a just and equitable world!



*Eileen, Lily, Sue, Diana, Val, Cathy, Nancy at Hill Auditorium!*

### Washtenaw

### Interfaith Round Table

### Thanksgiving Celebration

Lily Tinker Fortel read one of the responsive readings during the Interfaith Round Table's Annual Thanksgiving Celebration. It was a beautiful event, held at Beth Israel Congregation.



# Spiritual Growth and Development - Looking Forward

Lily Tinker Fortel

## Family Fun Night December 8 - 6:00-8:30

ALL Bethlehem members are welcome at Family Fun Night on Friday, December 8! We'll have Christmas-themed activities and a movie!



## Youth Group in December:

December is a busy month! Here are key Youth Group dates:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Thursday, 12/7</b>  | Youth Group will participate in the Women's Advent Evening. Young women and their mothers are invited to join tables hosted by Lily Tinker Fortel and their mothers. Young men are invited to help other men of Bethlehem with service for this celebration. |
| <b>Sunday, 12/10</b>   | Christmas Pageant during 10 a.m. service. See rehearsal schedule on page 10.   |
| <b>Thursday, 12/14</b> | Youth are invited to participate in the Blue Christmas service at 7:00 p.m. We will have a simple dinner at 6:30 p.m. for the youth before the 7:00 service.   |
| <b>Friday, 12/15</b>   | Youth Group Christmas Lock-In! 6 p.m. Friday to 8 a.m. Saturday 12/16  |
| <b>Thursday, 12/21</b> | Youth Group Christmas Party at Lily's house (437 S. 4th Ave.) 6:30-8:30 p.m.   |

## Bethlehem Prayer Circle

Please join us in person or in spirit as we lift up our prayers for one another, members and friends of the Bethlehem community, and our world. Come when you can, leave when you must!

**Thursday, December 7 - 11:30 a.m.**

**Thursday, December 21 - 11:30 a.m.**



## Care Packages for College Students!



Do you know of a college student who would appreciate a care package? The Youth Group will send care packages to Bethlehem's college students so they arrive early in the 2018 spring semester.

**Please email Lily ([lily@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:lily@bethlehem-ucc.org)) with the student's name and mailing address at college, or sign up on the bulletin board!**



At a recent Bethlehem veterans' breakfast, Dave Gilmore shared a wonderful story about a veterans' program called "Wreaths across America" that he is hoping to be a part of on December 16:

*"Each December on **National Wreaths across America Day**, our mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and at more than 1200 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea, and abroad."*

Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington,

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## WEEK BY WEEK, DECEMBER AT A GLANCE

### (Youth Group and Spiritual Development)

Lily Tinker Fortel

December 7	11:30 a.m. Bethlehem Prayer Circle in the lounge
December 7	6:00-8:00 p.m. Women's Advent Evening (Youth Group event for this evening)
December 8	6:00-8:30 Family Fun Night. Dinner, activities, movie!
December 9	10 a.m.-noon Christmas Pageant rehearsal (lunch included!)
December 10	Christmas Pageant followed by Advent workshop and all-church potluck
December 11	1:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl Ministry in the lounge
December 14	7:00 p.m. Blue Christmas service, sanctuary
December 15	6:00 p.m. to December 16 at 8 a.m. - Youth Group Christmas Lock-In
December 18	1:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl Ministry in the lounge
December 21	11:30 a.m. Bethlehem Prayer Circle in the lounge
December 21	6:30 p.m. Youth Group Christmas Party at Lily's house
December 24	Christmas Eve Services at 10:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 11:00 p.m.
December 28	Christmas Break - No Youth Group

(Continued from page 8)

Maine, was a 12-year-old paper boy for the *Bangor Daily News* when he won a trip to Washington, D.C. His first trip to our nation's capital was one he would never forget, and Arlington National Cemetery made an especially indelible impression on him. This experience followed him throughout his life and successful career, reminding him that his good fortune was due, in large part, to the values of this nation and the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

In 1992, Worcester Wreath had a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. Remembering his boyhood experience at Arlington, Worcester realized he had an opportunity to honor our country's veterans. With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, arrangements were made for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery that had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year.

As plans were under way, a number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help.

James Prout, owner of local trucking company Blue Bird Ranch, Inc., generously provided transportation all the way to Virginia. Volunteers from the local American Legion and VFW Posts gathered with members of the community to decorate each wreath with traditional red, hand-tied bows. Members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C., helped to organize the wreath laying, which included a special ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The annual tribute went on quietly for several years until 2005, when a photo of the stones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet. Suddenly, the project received national attention. Thousands of requests poured in from all over the country from people wanting to help with Arlington, to emulate the Arlington project at their national and state cemeteries, or to simply share their stories and thank Morrill Worcester for honoring our nation's heroes.

**To donate, please visit**

**[www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/donate](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/donate)**.



# NEWS FROM THE EDUCATION MINISTRY TEAM

Jane Schmerberg

## Annual Children's Christmas Pageant

Please join us on Sunday, December 10, at 10:00 for our annual Children's Christmas Pageant followed by an all-church Advent Potluck and Advent Workshop. During the 10:00 service our youth will be performing a short Christmas program called *Star Trip—Our Faith Awakens*. This play combines the fun of a *Star Wars* spoof while weaving in the Christmas story to teach us the important lesson of the season.

*A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...well, not a galaxy far, far away.  
A long time ago, in a land sort of far away. It is a period of unrest for the people of God.  
The Empire of King Herod—backed by the Roman oppressors—is a dark force in the land of Judah.  
Who can bring light into this dark situation? Who can bring light into the darkness?  
Men from the east (who may resemble Yoda, Luke, and Obi-wan Kenobi)  
believe they have found the answer. These men—whom some call wise, some call Magi,  
some say they were kings—spot a new light in the night sky.  
They follow this star believing that it will lead them to another light.  
A light for all men and women. The light of the world—the one sent of God.*

The *Star Trip* Christmas Pageant is an opportunity for our congregation to take a journey with the Magi. They will follow a star that promises new life. They will encounter frustration. They will see the dark side in the court of King Herod (who might resemble Darth Vader). In the end, they will meet Jesus, the light that gives light to all people. *Star Trip* takes lighthearted Nativity sketches and combines them with worshipful narration, Bible readings, and singing to create a one-of-a-kind Christmas experience.

**All** of our youth are welcome to participate. There are acting parts, short speaking parts, short scripture passages to read, and the chance to sing.

## PAGEANT REHEARSAL INFORMATION

**Saturday, Dec. 9**

All youth (preschool through high school) rehearse at 10 a.m. with pizza lunch to follow

**Sunday, Dec. 10**

9:15 in the sanctuary for quick run-through followed by the program at 10:00 service.

Please contact Sarah Herwick at [sarahherwick@gmail.com](mailto:sarahherwick@gmail.com), Jane Schmerberg at [jmnmd@med.umich.edu](mailto:jmnmd@med.umich.edu), or Lily Tinker Lily Tinker Fortel at [lily@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:lily@bethlehem-ucc.org) if you would like to help or have questions.

**STAR**  
**OUR FAITH AWAKENS**  
**TRIP**  
**CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**

**STAR TRIP**  
**Christmas Pageant**  
**December 10,**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**in the Bethlehem Sanctuary**  
***Don't miss it!***





## All-Church Potluck and Advent Workshop - December 10

On December 10 our annual potluck will take place in the Fellowship Hall after the Christmas Pageant. Please sign up for a dish to share. Questions to Jan Eadie at [jee21152@gmail.com](mailto:jee21152@gmail.com). Not hungry? Coffee hour will still be available. Come join us.

During the potluck our Advent Workshop will be taking place. This annual event is created by our very talented Nancy Pieske. She will have tables of fun and easy crafts for young and old. This is a chance to make some decorations and little gifts and treats to share during the holiday. There are fun things for all abilities. We welcome everyone to participate. The tables will be set up in the Willimann Fellowship Hall on the outside edges surrounding the round tables, where we can congregate and eat. Questions to Nancy Pieske at [npieske@cfcu.org](mailto:npieske@cfcu.org).

## Youth Mission Project and Christmas Collections

Please help us with our ongoing youth mission project and Christmas collections. Please give generously to those who have the most need. We have 3 collections going on at this time:



**The Mitten Tree** will be up by the Fourth Avenue entrance. Please bring hats, mittens, and scarves that we will donate to Washtenaw Refugee Welcome (WRW) and Peace Neighborhood Center. Our friends from WRW loved our hand-knit items from last year, and we told them we would contribute again.



**Gift Card Donations** for Peace Neighborhood Center, so that families can enjoy the fun of buying food and gifts for their holiday celebrations. Bring to the church office or bring to Sunday worship and place them in the manger in the sanctuary. Deadline is December 18.



**Youth Mission Collection** for the Ruth Ellis Center will continue through the end of the year. There are 2 collection boxes. One is in the library and the other is at the Fourth Avenue entrance near the Welcome Center. You can also bring them on Sunday morning and place them in the manger in the sanctuary. We are collecting clothing for teens, including sweatshirts (their greatest need), underwear, socks, and leggings/pants/jeans for young men and women.



## COMING TO BETHLEHEM ON JANUARY 21 ONA Discussion and Lunch with U-M Grad Student Ben Hollenbach

The ONA Standing Committee is hosting an inspiring presentation with our U-M grad-student friend Ben Hollenbach after 10 o'clock worship on January 21. Ben has something new up his sleeve for us. He'll facilitate a discussion on LGBTQ inclusion, at church and in the wider community.

Lunch will be provided. We'll have warm words for our souls and hot soup for our winter chills. Please join us!



## MEMORIALS & GIFTS

### GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Carolyn Ferri Memorial

### PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Elsie Lovelace Memorial

Laura O'Reilly Memorial

### RADIO FUND

Margaret K. Deverick

### TREE OF LIFE

Donald Rutledge

**Gifts listed were received through  
November 30, 2017**

### RADIO BROADCAST

**November 19, 2017**

Sponsored by **Marion Seyfried**, in  
memory of **Frederick J. Seyfried**  
and his daughter **Nancy Seyfried**.

## PARISH RECORDS

### Deaths

**Delphine Hartman**

November 9, 2017

**Tudor Bradley**

November 21, 2017

**Charles Schlanderer**

December 1, 2017



## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

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

**As of December 5 we have  
received 98 Pledge Cards  
for a total of \$222,712.**

If you have not returned  
your Pledge Card or your  
Time and Talent sheet,  
please do so as soon as you  
are able. Call the office if you  
need additional forms. Thank  
you for all you do to support  
Bethlehem Church!

**Dear Bethlehem Friends,**

As I write this I am surrounded by all the cards and kind words from my Bethlehem family. I want you to know that I am sure it is the power of all your prayers that has supported and carried me throughout this journey to wellness. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

**Debbie Karr**



"I would like to thank the members of Bethlehem for their prayers, cards, and thoughtful words of support during my recent recovery from knee surgery. I am blessed to be a part of the Bethlehem family."

**Judy Coucouvanis**

November, 2017	Year to Date	YTD Target	2017 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$380,809	\$413,391	\$450,972
Expenses	\$470,180	\$507,409	\$553,537
Net	(\$89,371)	(\$94,018)	(\$102,565)

## STAR BAZAAR THANK-YOU Deborah Karr



We have successfully completed another Bethlehem Star Bazaar, and we couldn't have done it without the help and support of many Bethlehem members and friends.

Bethlehem is blessed to be surrounded by many talented cooks, supplying a variety of bake sale items, delicious pies, and the ever-expanding salad bar. Thank you to everyone who shared their skills with us. And a special thank-you to Paul and Barb Marshall for the many hours they spent to provide us with an amazing turkey and beef luncheon. It was truly delicious.



Thank you to everyone who brought a quilt to display and shared their stories. The quilts were inspiring as well as beautiful. Thank you for the donations of the many Christmas items, handicrafts, jewelry, and purses. The quantity of so many beautiful items greatly contributed to the success of the Star Bazaar.

And thank you to the countless number of volunteers who helped set up, decorate, serve, scrub, clean, and put things away. Because of everyone's willingness to share their time and talents we were able to make contributions to Peace Neighborhood Center, Alpha House, Bethlehem Property Improvements, and the Women's Treasury; as well as share an afternoon together in fellowship.



## CEMETERY BOARD

Sallie Stadel

The end of the year is fast approaching. Now that winter has arrived, improvements to the cemetery grounds have ended for this year. In the spring, more improvements are planned, including the planting of new trees.

Why not donate a tree in honor or memory of a loved one? The Cemetery Board has a list of trees deemed appropriate for planting in cemeteries, and you are welcome to choose one from the list. If there other specific items you would like to help fund, we encourage you to contact a member of the board. We are open to suggestions, and donations are always helpful.

***Merry Christmas and Blessings for the New Year from all of us:***

*Jim Goforth, Mike Haab, Susan Irwin, Jim Lutz, Marilyn Pearson, and Sallie Stadel.*



## CHRISTMAS WREATH MEMORIALS

### DONOR

Donna Kearney  
Barb Fisher  
Jim & Karen Goforth  
Mary & Jim Lutz  
Kathy Warner  
Marty & Laura Seyfried  
Nancy Thibault

### SMALL WREATHS IN MEMORY OF

Larry Marshall  
David Fisher  
Kellie Goforth  
Betty & Burt Lutz  
Bill Gilbert  
Lloyd & Geri Seyfried  
William & Aletta Kulenkamp



### DONOR

Jan Eadie  
Mary Jean Raab and Chuck Raab  
Ken & Judi Tappe  
Michael & Harriette Ehnis  
Julie Seitz & the Michael F. Ehnis Family  
Mary Friend  
Mary Friend

### LARGE WREATHS IN MEMORY OF

Raymond & Elizabeth Lambarth  
Jean & Carl Raab  
Raymond & Marie Zahn  
Martha Ebinger  
Virginia Seitz  
Robert & Geraldine Paul  
Alfred Paul



Many thanks to these awesome women for representing Bethlehem at the fall "Skate against Hate" event at the Ann Arbor Skate Park.

We would have liked to include a picture of them skateboarding, but they were so fast, we could not capture them on camera!



Thanks, guys, for braving the scaffolding to put up the new Covenant of Welcome banner in the sanctuary.



Thanks to a generous gift, the church was able to replace its rickety old fridge with this brand-new one, and just in time to keep pretzel production going.



Thank you to all our veterans who were recently honored during our 10 a.m. service as part of a Veterans' Day Recognition and Luncheon.  
Thank you for your service to our country.

### Bethlehem Church Ongoing Outreach Opportunities

Please consider joining in!

Sign-up sheets are in the office hallway.



#### FOOD GATHERERS COMMUNITY KITCHEN

January 7 & February 4 (first Sunday of each month)

*Please sign up in the office hallway for 12–2:30 cooking shift.*



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

January 23 (no December volunteer day)

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

*Fresh Produce distribution, Fridays from 9–12.*



#### FOOD GATHERERS FOOD BARREL, ongoing

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



### WANTED: MONDAY CHURCH-OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

We are in need of church office volunteers on the first two Mondays of the month. The office is open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. You could schedule a morning or afternoon shift or work all day!

Bethlehem office volunteers are an important part of the daily operation of the church, providing assistance to the staff, as well as to the members of our congregation. The job would include answering phones, greeting people at the window, stuffing programs or letters for mailings, and working with staff members. A staff member would always be present to answer questions. If you are interested, please contact Tom Ziesemer or call the office.



### ***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 Church—Our Core Values**

- ♦ **Growing** spiritually in our faith journey together
- ♦ **Worshipping** together to seek and share God's love
- ♦ **Connecting** with God and each other in a supportive, nurturing way
- ♦ **Reaching out** to our members, community, country, and the world through support and service

### **Bethlehem's Ministry Team**

Rev. John Kennedy

Pastor

Rev. Orval L.E. Willimann

Pastor Emeritus

Lily Tinker Fortel

Minister of Spiritual Growth  
and Development

Carol Leyshock

Parish Administrator

Betty Clark

Financial Administrator

Donna Whitney

Parish Secretary

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.