

January

The Visitor

February

January / February 2021
Bethlehem United Church of Christ

Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?

*Good friend, do not forget all I have taught you; take to heart my commands. They will help you live a long time, a long life lived full and well. **Do not lose your grip on Love and Loyalty.** Tie them around your neck; carve their initials on your heart. Earn a reputation for living well in God's eyes and the eyes of the people. **Trust God, from the bottom of your heart; do not try to figure out everything on your own.** Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; God is the one who will keep you on track. Do not assume that you know it all. **Run to God! Run from evil!** Your body will glow with health; your very bones will vibrate with life! - Proverbs 3:1-12*

The whole world, (including all of us) is asking, "Where do we go from here, will it be continued chaos or beloved community?" Another question is, "When will things get back to normal?" Normal? Well, what is "normal"? Normal for who, and for what generation? If we are to decide where we go from here, we have to explore deep questions, asking what is Truth, and where do we find it? Will we listen for and accept God's truth and live into that truth, even when it is presented to us? Will God's truth inform every part of our lives? As Christians, we consider Jesus as one who speaks the truth. Jesus' understanding of truth came from the true source of truth and reality, which is God. We are told in Scripture that, when Jesus told the truth and lived the truth, he was accused of being a liar. Four-years-ago, in January, I preached a sermon exploring the question of "Truth" in selected Scriptures from The Gospel of John. In this story, Jesus is under arrest, and being interrogated by Pilate:

"Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice.' 'What is truth?' Pilate asked." - John 18:37-38

Pilate's response to Jesus, "What is truth?", is one of dismissal, nullification, and sarcasm. He is not looking for an answer to the question. Pilate is saying, there is no truth, he denies that any objective truth even exists. Pilate believes those in power define "reality" and truth. Jesus, proclaims, "you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:31). Knowing the truth is one thing, living it like Jesus is another. Jesus was not crucified for knowing the truth, he was crucified for living and being the truth. There is a big difference, just asked Peter in his denial.

There is a quote that "The journey of a thousand-miles begins with, one step." Perhaps the journey toward normal (on earth as it is in heaven) is taking one truthful step (as best as we know it) one step at a time.

February, is Black History Month. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's book "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" was written in 1967, and was his last published book before his assassination on April 4, 1968. I still remember watching David Brinkley, announcing Rev. King's death as we watched the evening news. I asked mother, "Why?" Mama said, "because he is one of God's prophets, and he spoke God's truth, and people weren't ready to hear the truth, so they tried to kill it."

(continued on page 2)

**Deadline for the
March Edition of the Visitor
is Monday, February 15**



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Office Hours

Due to the
COVID-19
Pandemic, the
office is currently
closed.

(continued from page 1)

"Where Do We Go from Here", has made a recent comeback. In it, Rev. King, asserts that America is so entrenched in the lie of systemic-racism that the pursuit of God's truth, will have to be intentional and relentless. Rev. King shares that, "the persistence of racism in its depth, and the growing awareness of the **Negro demands will necessitate structural changes in society** have generated a **new phase of white resistance in North and South**". Rev. King shared that racism was just as intense and imbedded in the North as in the South. The difference was that in the South it was all out in the open. In the North, folks liked the idea of equal rights until they understood that to make equality a reality, it would mean equal opportunity. Many of us even today, believe we support equal rights, yet we still live in neighborhoods where everyone looks just like us. How many of us built or own a home in a neighborhood where a person of color could not live or does not live? That's truth. At the end of the day, after learning about racism, we get to drive back home to our homogenous neighborhoods. Having a dream is different than making it happen even at one's own risk.

"King was aware of the anger and rise of different groups such as the rise of Black Nationalism and the increasing use of the slogan "Black Power" in the movement. While he praised the slogan as "a call to black people to amass the political and economic strength to achieve their legitimate goals," he also recognized that its implied rejection of interracial coalitions and call for retaliatory violence "prevent it from having the substance and program to become the basic strategy for the civil rights movement in the days ahead" (King, 36; 44).

Condemning the advocacy of black separatism, **King maintained that there would be no genuine progress for African Americans "unless the whole of American society takes a new turn toward greater economic justice"** (King, 50). Despite King's impatience with Black Power proponents, he ended the book on an optimistic note, calling for continued faith in "mass nonviolent action and the ballot" and including his own "Program and Prospects" for black advancement (King, 129; 193-202)". - Welcome to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research & Education Institute. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/>

King's vision and dream still requires a continuous search for truth. One of Rev. King's favorite hymns that he often quoted was "Once to Every Man and Nation". It describes that in each person's own time (right now) they must vigorously pursue the truth although sometimes elusive because of entrenched denial. Truth is real! If there is no objective truth, then we cannot even claim the existence of a loving God, who is the source of the universe and all that there is. Truth shows us where to go, what to take with us, and how to know if we are on the right path. Truth, to be relevant must be discerned now, not 40 years from now in hindsight. Many who claim to appreciate Rev. King see him in hindsight where he has become domesticated with time, and yet fight those in our time who seek to advance Rev. King's very message.

We are in the midst of a crises (actually several) and we must seek truth right now, even in the midst of those who deny it. Too often, we claim we want to hear "Truth" yet we want it to be delivered in a pain-free way that cause no upset or conflict. In this time of COVID-19, economic crises/inequality, lack of healthcare, an unequal system of justice and opportunity; you and I must truly seek truth from sources that using verifiable facts, peer reviewed science, medical expertise, and economic understanding for the benefit of all. Let's start the journey together one step at a time. COVID-19 is a deadly virus-True! It should have been shouted from the mountain tops-True! The pandemic speaks to those facts, and that they are verifiable-True! Masks save lives-True! The truth is God is real! God created us all and Scripture tells us that God has no favorites. It is God's truth that there is only one race of human beings with different pigments. It is a truth that speaking and living God's truth is always risky and always requires self-sacrifice. Truth must be lived NOW to be relevant. Truth that none of us can change another but we must live our truth visibly in real time at the moment it is need. In closing here are 2 verses from Rev. King's often quoted hymn "Once to Every Person and Nation" (written 1845).

Once to every person and nation,
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
 Some great cause, some great decision,
 Offering each the bloom or blight,
 And the choice goes by forever,
 'Twixt that darkness and that light.
 "By the light of burning martyrs,
 Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,
 Toiling up new Calv'ries ever
 With the cross that turns not back;
New occasions teach new duties,
Ancient values test our youth;
They must upward still and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth".

God loves you with no take-backs!

Pastor John

From Your President's Desk



I always said I'd never become like my parents: no teaching, no going to bed early, no going to church, no interest in genealogy. Of course, I didn't keep **any** of those resolutions: I taught, both in industry and at a Community College; I love not only an afternoon nap, but retiring early and often; I haven't missed a worship service in years and lastly, I'm deeply involved in the Bethlehem Cemetery. (Not **that** way!)

With my interest in websites, I naturally pricked up my ears when I heard of an opportunity to maintain "Locate A Grave" on the [Bethlehem Cemetery Website](https://bethlehem-ucc.org/cemeteryhome/) (<https://bethlehem-ucc.org/cemeteryhome/>) How hard could it be? For the technically inclined: I took an Excel

spreadsheet with burial data, extracted from it a comma-separated text file read by a PHP page into a MySQL database hosted on GoDaddy with other PHP pages presenting forms allowing one to query by last, or first and last name.

The result from searching for Carole Katz is shown like this:

Last Name	First Name	Show	Block Number	Lot Number	Birth Date	Death Date	Burial Date	Veteran	Find A Grave
Katz	Carole	Show Map	16	90	5/28/1942	12/16/2019	1/2/2020		Find A Grave

There are nearly 8,800 burials recorded in the spreadsheet, from Barbara Sindlinger buried in 1826 to burials in late December 2020. Deed numbers recently surpassed the 4,000 mark. The cemetery is divided into nineteen blocks with a varying number of lots in each. Lot sizes vary, but the standard one has four quarters, each of which contains two plots. This break-down lends itself to descriptions such as "Lot 14 Block 19 NW ¼ E ½." One must proofread very carefully!

One extension to Bethlehem's Cemetery website gives users the opportunity to see search results in a useful tool, "[Find A Grave](#)." With over 190,000,000 memorials in thousands of cemeteries worldwide, it gives details, such as grave photographs and links to deceased relatives. Carole Katz's "Find A Grave" button goes to a page listing three Katz's; clicking Carole's entry brings up:




Photo added by [memorial searcher](#)

[+ Add Photos](#) [Request Photo](#)

Carole Ann *Daehler* Katz

BIRTH 28 May 1942
Portsmouth, Scioto County, Ohio, USA

DEATH 16 Dec 2019 (aged 77)
Saline, Washtenaw County, Michigan, USA

BURIAL [Bethlehem Cemetery](#)
Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan, USA [Add to Map](#)

MEMORIAL ID 217489831 · [View Source](#)

[SHARE](#) [+ SAVE TO](#) [SUGGEST EDITS](#)

The remainder of this page contains Carole's obituary: an item loved ones often provide.

There are opportunities to augment our records with Find A Grave birth and death dates. I've even found a few problems in Find A Grave entries for which I submitted change requests they implemented!

I've become familiar with many venerable names in Ann Arbor history: Allmendinger (51 memorials), Frey (47), Steeb (41), Finkbeiner (28), Stamadianos (1), Argyropoulos (1), and Papanastasopoulos (4).

You may have noticed a change in ethnicity! The last three names are probably from St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which even owns some plots itself. As does the Detroit Railroad (with a burial back in 1891). The Salvation Army of Adrian Michigan owns five spaces. Not all stones are in English, of course. At least German (surprise!), Greek, Russian, and Chinese are represented.

Our church office staff (and volunteers) help keep Bethlehem Cemetery's records. These records are both electronic and paper with the latter kept both at the church and the cemetery office. Updates are made to the paper copies, due to burials and plot sales.

In summary: I've learned how to spell "cemetery" – all e's, no a's!

John Samford

January/February 2021

December 2020	Year to Date	YTD Target	2020/2021 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$264,704	\$244,101	\$418,458
Expenses	\$248,618	\$276,778	\$474,477
Net	\$16,086	(\$32,678)	(\$56,019)

ANTI-RACISM WORK—LEARNING TOGETHER

Anti Bias Study Group - Learning How to See

By Tim Authier

“Wisdom is not the gathering of more facts and information, as if that would eventually coalesce into truth. Rather Wisdom is a different way of seeing and knowing. Nothing new—no perspective, no experience, nor even love can come to us when we are full of ourselves, our agendas, and our own points of view.” -- Richard Rohr

Host Brian McLaren says in episode 6 of the podcast series ***Learning How to See***, “religion can tell us the hard truth we don’t want to hear, but it also can tell us all the truths that we want to hear to comfort us and keep us in our illusions.” McLaren along with Rev. Jaqui Lewis and Fr. Richard Rohr round out the team of clergy in the podcast series discussing bias and how it impacts us socially, politically, and spiritually. Their work formed the basis of the B.U.C.C. Exploring Our Shadows group that recently wrapped up its work together. As a group we listened to each podcast, then we met, talked about what it meant to us, asked questions, explored connections and had amazing, deep, and spiritual discussions as a result. As the second of two workshops that took place this fall, the thoughtful and reflective musing that took root in us resonated with the group in a variety of ways.

Our work together resonated with many in our group. I was reminded of the spiritual challenges we read in the Bible and hear from sermons to transform one’s self, to move beyond the egoic state of awareness and to carry our own cross as we are instructed in the book of Luke (14:27). Together we began to see the burden of racism, bias, and privilege and the ways we encumber us. The late theologian and author Eugene Peterson, says in his text ***Run With the Horses***, “the outside is a lot easier to reform than the inside. Going to the right church and saying the right words is a lot easier than working out a life of justice and love among the people you work and live with. Showing up at church once a week and saying a hearty Amen is a lot easier than engaging a life of daily prayer and Scripture meditation that develops into concern for poverty and injustice, hunger and war.” The community at B.U.C.C. hears words like this as a challenge and, as the past two study sessions have shown, we are hungry to grow and engage in the life of prayer and meditation. This was never easy for any of us because the fear of being judged or shamed during our discussions was always present with us, however the spirit of our group rose to the occasion, growing instead into a safe place to ponder, wonder, question, and explore. As Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians “there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (**1 Corinthians 12:25-27**). The study groups we developed this past fall are exciting as the community at Bethlehem takes important steps to counter the racism and bias that continues to plague our nation.

So what did we study? What was the focus of our study group? It started with our examination of who we are as white people, digging into what white privilege is and means to us and our community. Following the white privilege curriculum developed by the United Church of Christ, we developed a study group that supported each other as we were confronted by challenging ideas and perspectives of the world we know. At the conclusion of the workshop, and inspired by the newly published podcast called ***Learning How To See***, the Anti Bias group formed. In sometimes lively and sometimes ponderous discussions trying to find our ways on our own journeys in a supportive community we spent 8 weeks exploring the thoughts, ideas and provocations the podcast presented to us. As McLaren says in the introduction to the series, “‘How can we learn to see, to see what’s really there, to see what our neighbor sees but that we’ve always missed, to help others see what we see, to open our eyes together and see what we’ve never seen, or even been able to see?’ If you’ve ever read the gospels, you’ll remember that Jesus has a lot to say about seeing. ‘You have eyes,’ he said, ‘but you do not see.’ How can we learn to see?” This, to me, is what Peterson challenges us to do, be a church, engage in scripture, engage in a life together and grow in community as members of Christ.

A Glance into the Criminal (In)justice System: Looking at Mass Incarceration Through the Lens of Race

655 out of every 100,000 people in the United States are incarcerated. A disproportionate amount of those individuals are Black people and other people of color. How did we get here? Why does our criminal *justice* system treat so many people so *unjustly*? In this workshop we'll discuss the concept of mass incarceration, some factors that contribute to mass incarceration, as well as how racism connects to these factors. Starting on February 3rd, the workshop will meet over Zoom on Wednesday's from 6:30-8:00pm for six weeks. If you are interested in participating or have any questions, feel free to contact Chloe Schmerberg (chloe.schmerberg@gmail.com).

Wednesdays in February and March

6:30-8:00pm via Zoom

February 3, 10, *17, 24, March 3 & 10 (*Ash Wednesday -- Time TBD)

To sign-up follow this link: <https://forms.gle/7jttL3d75hPYdxY8> or email Chloe: chloe.schmerberg@gmail.com

From Lily

Greetings from our home to yours on the first Monday in January 2021. As I look out our living room window onto a snow-covered yard, it seems winter is finally here. The energy of the holidays has subsided (*yes, even these unusual COVID holidays, which Steve and I celebrated just the two of us, felt energetic*), but we're still not ready to take down the Christmas decorations. I find myself aware that the New Year is here, but not quite clear about what that means.

I imagine many of you have similar sentiments. One thing I'm aware of going into 2021 is that there are so many unknowns about what will happen in our individual and communal lives in the coming months. One thing 2020 reinforced for me is that so much in life is unpredictable.

While I'm sure we can all think of many things we didn't like (*that's probably an understatement*) about 2020, I'm also struck with how much inspired me and I want to carry these things with me in 2021. Together - though to varying degrees - we have lived through trauma in 2020 and I'm inspired by how resilient we are. I'm inspired by how adaptable we can be. I'm inspired by how caring we can be. I'm inspired by how we can rely on the foundations of love, family, faith, and community to guide us in times of profound change. I'm inspired by how connected we are--and by how beautiful humanity can be when we honor our connections with one another and with the earth.

2020 was an extraordinary year. Even in the midst of the pains, it was a joy to experience it with you as part of the Bethlehem UCC community. Whatever you are carrying with you from 2020--whatever anticipation you hold and whatever you are feeling as we begin 2021--is okay. I wish you hope, I wish you health, I wish you the healing of the unconditional LOVE of our faith that is for each of us and for all.

Happy New Year, dear Bethlehem,
Lily

Note of Thanks from Lily

Thank you to everyone who attended my Zoom ordination on Sunday November 22, 2020. Thanks also to all who sent well-wishes and cards in celebration! Thank you to the Bethlehem community for the communion set and the Message Bible. I am deeply grateful to the Bethlehem community for accompanying and encouraging me during these past three-plus years of my discernment journey. It is a joy to walk with you!

Christmas Eve Kit distribution

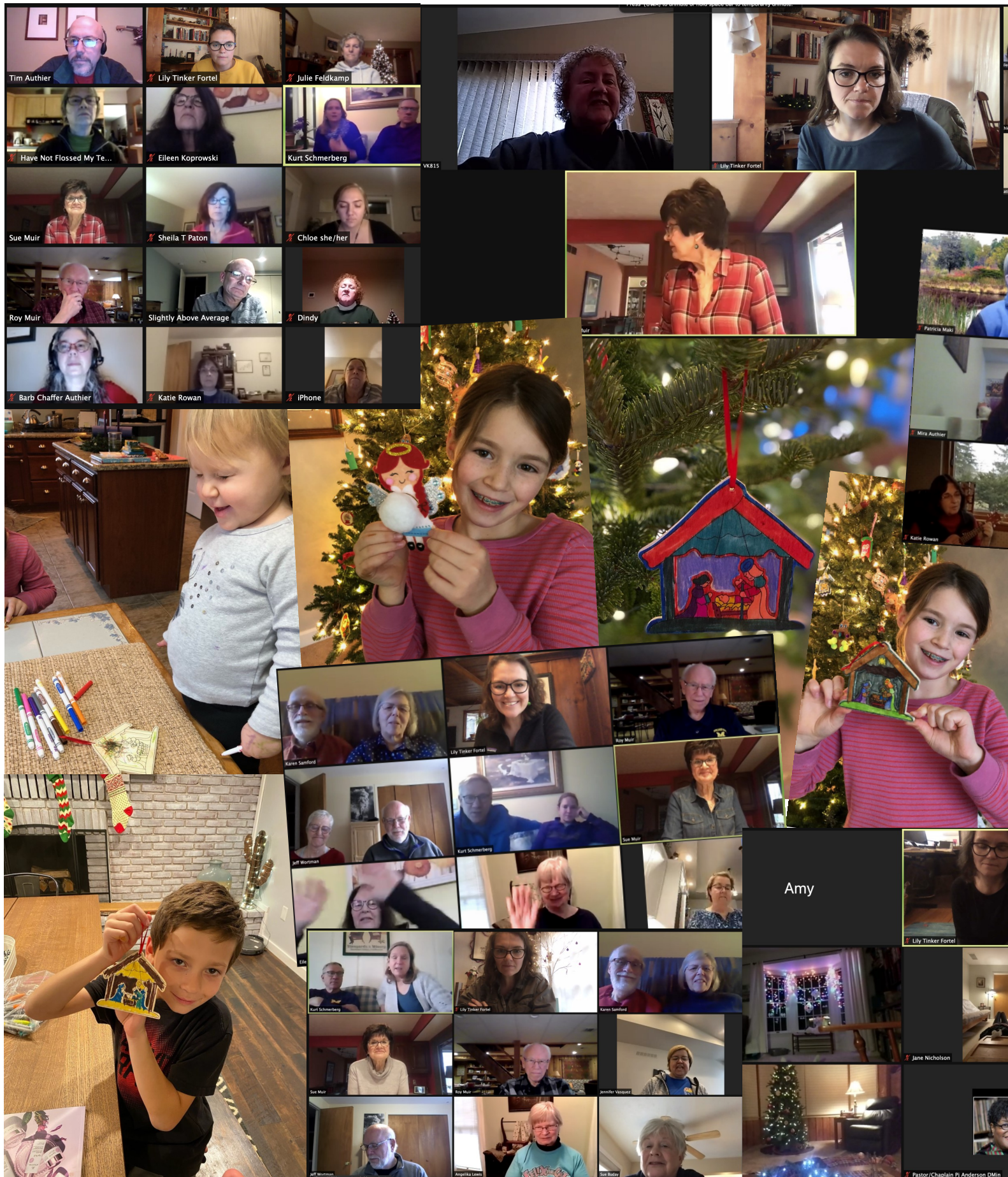


Thanks to everyone who helped create and distribute Christmas Eve kits on December 20. The drive-thru, contactless pick-up and individual deliveries were a huge success. Nearly 100 households and 25

children/youth received kits! Thanks to the Worship Ministry Team, staff, Member Care Ministry Team, Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team, Education Ministry Team, and all who supported this effort.



~ ~ SPIRITUAL GROWTH



H & DEVELOPMENT ~ ~



Weekly Spiritual Growth & Development Activities

Pastor Lily Tinker Fortel - Minister of Spiritual Growth and Development

Weekly Spiritual Growth and Development Activities in January

Sundays

- Fellowship Hour, Sundays at 11:00 am on ZOOM. *See Friday group emails for link.*

Tuesdays

- Roundtable Pulpit Bible Study, Tuesdays 12:00 pm.
Join your pastors for a study of the coming Sunday's scripture lesson. ZOOM link available upon request.

Weekly Spiritual Growth and Development Activities in February

Sundays

- Fellowship Hour, Sundays at 11:00 am on ZOOM. *See Friday group emails for link.*

Tuesdays

- Roundtable Pulpit Bible Study, Tuesdays 12:00 pm.
Join your pastors for a study of the coming Sunday's scripture lesson. ZOOM link available upon request.

Wednesdays

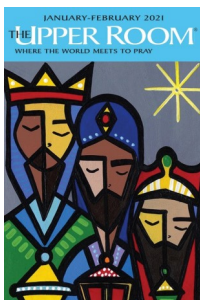
- BUCCuleles Jam Session—Weekly at 4:00 pm.
- Anti-Racism Work Continues: See page 5 for more information. This is a continuation of Bethlehem's antiracism study and exploration. Wednesdays in February from 6:30-8:00 pm.

Other SG&D Events

- Gentle Yoga: Join Lily for very gentle meditative yoga practice via ZOOM. Day/Time: TBD. Email Lily if you'd like to receive information.
- Prayer Circle: First Thursdays—(2/4) 12:00-12:30 pm.
- Virtual Happy Hour: 5:00-5:30 pm. 2nd and 4th Wednesdays (2/10 & 2/24). Join others from the community for an informal midweek check-in via ZOOM.
- Second Sunday, Sunday School: 2/14 via ZOOM from 11:00-11:30 am. Details via email.
- Weekly Lenten Prayer Check-In on Thursdays beginning February 18 (*see times below*).

Upper Room Devotional

The Upper Room has made their daily devotionals available as PDF for subscribing churches. Email Lily lily@bethlehem-ucc.org if you'd like to receive a copy of the devotional via email.



You may access a PDF copy from the church website by clicking [here](#). The PDF can also be located at: www.bethlehem-ucc.org under the events tab at the top of the page.

Lenten Spiritual Practices

Devotionals

It's hard to believe Lent is just around the corner. During the 2021 Lenten Season, we invite all in the congregation to participate in a daily devotional practice. Lenten Devotionals from the *stillspeaking writers' group* will be sent to our homebound members--and to anyone who requests them. They can also be picked up from Lily's house or downloaded as a PDF.

Weekly Lenten Prayer Check-In

All are invited to gather via Zoom for a time of prayer and reflection each week during Lent. We will "meet" at the following times:

- Thursday, February 18. 12:00-12:30pm
- Thursday, February 25. 5:00-5:30pm
- Thursday, March 4. 12:00-12:30pm
- Thursday, March 11. 5:00-5:30pm
- Thursday, March 18. 12:00-12:30pm
- Thursday, March 25. 5:00-5:30pm
- Thursday, April 1. 12:00-12:30pm

BUCCuleles: One-on-One Zoom Lessons

One-on-one zoom ukulele lessons are being offered for elementary age youth. A parent or another adult attends with the youth. There's one spot left! If you have an interested musician, contact Katie: rowank55@gmail.com to schedule at your convenience.



The Worship Team has accomplished miracles during 2020 given the challenges of COVID-19 and suspension of in-person services for most of the year (not that we are bragging!)

A primary focus was bringing creativity and a sensory experience to our worship services. A few highlights:

1. Water imagery and related prayers at a service in January related to Baptism of Jesus
2. Special Valentine service, focused on Love, including congregation members signing cards for homebound members
3. Lenten journey through the wilderness with take-home stones symbolizing the burdens we carry

Then COVID-19 hit, demanding an immediate pivot to online services, which really tested our creative capabilities. Our virtual services have engaged member participation at a new level, incorporating recorded segments from our pastoral and music team as well as our congregation. We have especially enjoyed contributions from families and children. Our services have included incredible music, in no small measure due to David and Gail's talents; and all virtual services have achieved our goal of ending within one hour.

We have all learned to serve Communion at home this year. We honored the passing of church members and loved ones during a virtual Totenfest service, holding on to the ritual of candle-lighting and reading of names. We have solicited photo or video contributions from members for themes such as School at Home, the Blessing of the Pets, and Advent Wreaths. The worship bags for Christmas Eve service attracted a strong response, with more than 100 bags picked up by worshipers during an afternoon drive-thru, bringing a strong end to the year.

Creativity remains our priority for 2021 with continued planning for virtual services until such time it is deemed safe to return to the sanctuary. Your Worship Team would appreciate feedback on what has worked and what you would like to see in the new year. Please provide your input to Jennifer Vasquez, Worship Team Chair, at jenniferavasquez29@gmail.com or 734-658-6692, or any of the other team members: Caroline Ashenfelter, Harriette Ehnis, Gary Kade, Gary Rogers, Marsha Rinke, Tom Ziesemer, Barb Chaffer Authier, and John Samford (Leadership Council liaison). Our team also includes Music Director & Video Editor David Hahn, Organist/Pianist Gail Jennings, and Pastors John and Lily.

\$6,680.37 Raised for Easy Water for Everyone!!!



In Early January, Bethlehem sent a check to Easy Water for Everyone in the amount of \$6,680.37!!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2020 Youth Lenten Mission Project of the Education Ministry Team, which became a year-long effort due to COVID. Your generosity is inspiring and will have a tangible difference in people's lives!

A note from Bethlehem Member Dr. Fritz Port, Easy Water for Everyone Board Member: *"Thank you all who helped with this large contribution to Easy Water for Everyone. These funds are sufficient to provide unlimited clean water for two villages that currently suffer from effects of chronically infected water. These funds suffice for the next five years."*



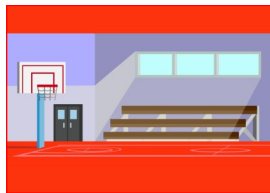
MEMBER CARE MOMENT

We are looking for volunteers who might like to record the member care moment with birthday greetings for the worship service. Please contact Jenny Foster at:

Membercare@bethlehem-ucc.org if

you would like to sign up for a Sunday.

Gym Rental for Members



Bethlehem UCC members can rent the gym for \$15 per hour, but must agree to follow the "Covid-19 Mitigation Expectations for Church Space Rental" guidelines, which includes mask use, sanitizing, contact list, screening and social distancing. Please contact the church office for information and scheduling options at info@bethlehem-ucc.org or 734-665-6149.

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received thru December 31, 2020

Bethlehem Cemetery Maintenance

Bob Dylenski Memorial
Conrad & Norma Foster Honorarium

Bethlehem Cemetery Tree Fund

Bob Dylenski Memorial

Current Fund

Gift in Memory of Earl Blaess and Eloise Blaess

Easy Water for Everyone Fund

Lily Tinker Fortel Ordination Honorarium
Pastor Lily and Steve Marriage Honorarium

General Memorial Fund

Gift in Memory of Earl Blaess and Eloise Blaess
Lois Haeussler Memorial

Holiday Outreach Appeal

Pastor Lily Ordination Honorarium

Property Improvement Fund

Betty Diuble Memorial
Bob Dylenski Memorial
Bill Fellenberger & Hilda McLaughlin Memorial

Gifts listed were received through
December 31, 2020

Radio Sponsorship

December 13: In memory of Erna & Art Jahnke
and Mary & Shorty Jahnke

Thank you!

Dear Bethlehem Church members and Pastor John, We wish to thank you for all your wonderful gipppts and thoughts this Christmas season and for those given for my birthday. We are enjoying the Advent Calendar and the battery candles plus the cutout nativity scene. We are grateful for all your prayers and wish you all the best in 2021.

Warmest love, Ruth Willmann.

RADIO BROADCAST SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP



Please remember that a lot of folks count on the weekly Radio Broadcast of our 10 o'clock worship service. This program is funded by weekly radio sponsorships, memorials, and special donations.

Have you sponsored a Radio Broadcast lately?

Are you looking for a way to honor or remember a friend or family member? A weekly Radio Sponsorship is \$230. In addition, general donations of any amount are appreciated. Thank you for supporting this important ministry.

- Click [here](#) to go to Sign-Up Genius and choose a date, and how you want your sponsorship to read.
- You can donate online at: bethlehem-ucc.org or leave a message at the church office (734) 665-6149 and someone will get back with you.

FROM THE CEMETERY BOARD

Thank you to all who gave donations to Bethlehem Cemetery over the past year. Your contributions help us maintain the cemetery and are greatly appreciated.



Outreach Ministry Team News

Thank you, Bethlehem....

You contributed approximately \$3,500 to the Holiday Appeal Fund! The staffs at Peace Neighbor Center, GroundCover, Food Gatherers, and Alpha House were so grateful for this support.

As we approach the end of 2020, your gifts to the Covid 19 Fund, Easy Water for Everyone, and the Holiday Appeal totaled approximately \$21,000!

Your support and generosity to our Outreach Mission are so appreciated.

You are Amazing....

A message from Peace Neighborhood Center to their supporters:

The additional emergency assistance that we have received ensured that Peace could provide a range of emergency assistance to families struggling to cover lost wages, rent, utility bills and food.

And you provided over 250 families with food and gifts to ensure the they have a happy holiday.

THANK
You
SO VERY
much

Bethlehem provided meals to Alpha House the week of December 9-12.

Thank you to the following persons who made it possible for the families at Alpha House to have a nourishing evening meal:

Mary Jean Raab

Rick & Stacey Stites

Jane Schmerberg

Katie Rowan & Sue Muir

Our next scheduled date to provide a meal will be Sunday, February 7, 2021.

We will be seeking volunteers!

Food Gatherers: What is food insecurity?

- Food insecurity means lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. 13.6% of residents in Washtenaw County struggle with food insecurity or hunger.
- Families with children have dramatic rates of food insecurity (92%) with parents frequently saying they skip meals and make portions smaller to make food last longer

For every \$5 you donate to Food Gatherers, you can help provide 15 meals to adults, seniors and children in need in our community.



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.

Our Core Values

- ♦ **Growing** spiritually in our faith journey together.
- ♦ **Worshiping** 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.

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.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

Staff, Ministry Team Chairs, and Leadership Council

STAFF

Pastor: Rev. John Kennedy
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Orval L.E. Willimann
Minister of Spiritual Growth and Development: Pastor Lily Tinker Fortel
Financial Administrator: Betty Clark
Parish Administrator: Julie Rhodes
Administrative Assistant: Gwenda Mayes
Director of Music: David Hahn
Organist: Gail Jennings
Director of Handbells: Jim Rowan
Sunday School Nursery Teacher: Kelsey Postler

MINISTRY TEAM CHAIRS

Finance: Karen Samford
Facilities: Tom Ziesemer
Education: Eileen Koprowski
Worship: Jennifer Vasquez
Member Care: Jenny Foster
Welcome: Jane Schmerberg
Outreach: Sue Muir/Roy Muir
Fellowship: Jan Eadie
Youth & Young Adult: Katie Rowan
Bethlehem Cemetery: Sue Buday
Nominations Committee: Cresson Sloten

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

President: John Samford
Vice President: Ron Dechert
Secretary: Tim Authier
Treasurer: Jim Rowan
At-Large Members:
 Dindy Haab
 Pat Huibregtse
 Pam Rutledge
Ex Officio: Rev. John Kennedy