



The Visitor

September, 2021
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Coming Back Around

Dear Bethlehem,

Last month I submitted my first article as President of the Congregation. In that article I invited all members of our church family to contact me or our Leadership Council with questions, suggestions, comments, or feedback. I want to thank those members who reached out to me. I continue to encourage you to contact me, your willingness to share with me or our Council provides an opportunity to exchange viewpoints and thoughts and grow closer together. More importantly, your input provides direction for our Council as we strive to develop the future vision for BUCC.

I, like most or all of you, have been watching the news outlets concerning the resurgence of COVID-19 through the Delta variant. Unfortunately, the virus has returned to our area and our lives. Earlier this month, the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) issued their new recommendations pertaining to the surging infection rate associated with COVID-19. They (WCHD) strongly recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a facemask while indoors around other people. How does this recommendation affect our worship and our use of the building? What can I do, on an individual basis, to best protect myself and those I come in contact with while in our building?

I do not consider myself, by any stretch of my imagination, an expert in infectious disease. While I do have extensive experience in healthcare, which involves care of the critically ill, pulmonary disease, and respiratory care. In addition, no one on our current Council is an expert in infectious disease but there are many who review data trends and best practices associated with mitigation of COVID. We on Leadership have the following guidance which we strongly recommend as best practice for everyone.

(continued on page 2)

Deadline for the October Edition of the Visitor is Wednesday, September 15



In This Issue

President's Message	Page 1-2	Supper Club Returns	Page 4
Rebuilding Our Choir	Page 2	Cemetery Report	Page 4
Veteran's Breakfast	Page 2	Sunday School	Page 5
Budget	Page 2	School Supply Drive	Page 5
Mask Recommendation	Page 3	Celebrating Ms. Kelsey	Page 5
Football Parking Sign Up	Page 3	Habitat for Humanity	Page 6
Memorial Gifts	Page 3	Crop Walk	Page 7
Volunteer Opportunities	Page 4	Who We Are	Page 8



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www.bethlehem-ucc.org
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Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday
9:30 am - 2:30 pm
(the office is closed on Mondays)

(continued on page 2)

First, please wear a face mask while in the building. We (Council) agree with WCHD and strongly recommend this practice to all, regardless of vaccination status. Wearing a mask protects you and those you come in contact with.

Second, please use the hand sanitizers that are located at each entrance and in each open pew. Hand hygiene is important now and as we move forward into the fall which is the traditional flu and cold season.

Third, please practice social distancing as much as possible when around people not in your usual "bubble". We have used streamers to close off 2 out of every 3 pews to maximize the distance between groups. There is some new data suggesting a different arrangement of seating may be more beneficial than what we currently have. Leadership will be looking at this new arrangement in the near future to determine if it provides more safety while offering similar or more capacity.

Fourth, please choose to not attend a Sunday service if you are not feeling well. We will miss you at that service but will look forward to you returning to our services as soon as possible.

I am aware that some in our congregation may not agree with these recommendations. I am happy to discuss differences of opinion and offer references to anyone who reaches out to me. As always I can be reached via email at the following address: rdechert@umich.edu.

God bless you and protect all of us during this trying time. Supporting each other, we can get through this period safely.

God's Grace,
Ron Dechert, President



Bethlehem Rebuilding Our Choir

Do you miss singing in church? Do you harmonize to the melodies everyone else sings? Join Bethlehem's

choir! Please reach out to our Music Director, David Hahn at: musicedirector@bethlehem-ucc.org and he will provide more details about rehearsals.



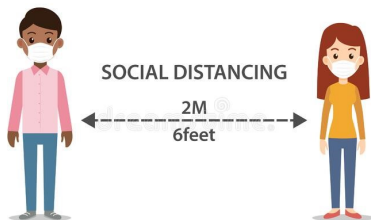
Bethlehem Veterans' & Friends Monthly Breakfast

Resumes Friday, October 1
at 8:30 am

Alpha Restaurant, Jackson Rd.
(formerly Classic Cup Café)

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

Email: ziesemertn@gmail.com



**Please
wear a mask.**

Stay Safe. Stay Healthy.

July 2021	Year to Date	YTD Target	2020/2021 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$120,705	\$84,434	\$506,604
Expenses	\$62,155	\$89,029	\$534,171
Net	\$58,549	(\$4,595)	(\$27,567)

Breaking News

New COVID-19 Mask Recommendations

Dear Friends,

Washtenaw County Health Department announced new guidance strongly recommending mask requirements for everyone at all indoor activities. Our Bethlehem COVID task force and Leadership Council support this new recommendation. Over the past three weeks, we have monitored the test positivity rates for Washtenaw County. The positivity rate has increased steadily from 1.2 to 2.6.

Leadership has voted to follow the lead from Washtenaw County. We are strongly recommending and requesting that everyone entering our building should wear a face mask while in the building regardless of vaccination status. It is our hope that by supporting this current recommendation we can continue to worship and use our building safely.

We will continue to keep our members, visitors, renters, and others updated as new information and recommendations come forward. Please consider wearing your face mask once again. We can do our part to fight against the new variant.

Feel free to contact myself or any member of our Leadership Council if you have any questions or additional comments.

God's Grace,
Ron Dechert
President
rdechert@umich.edu



It's almost FOOTBALL SEASON

which means

FOOTBALL PARKING in our church lot!

You can volunteer to help at

Sign-Up Genius by clicking [HERE](#)

Home games are these Saturdays:

- **September 4** **12:00 pm**
- **September 11** **8:00 pm**
- **September 18** **12:00 pm**
- **September 25** **3:30 pm**
- **October 23** **Time TBA**
- **November 6** **Time TBA**
- **November 27** **12:00 pm**

Shifts begin approximately 4 hours prior to the start of the game. Two volunteers are needed per shift.



*A great fundraiser
for Bethlehem*

Memorials and Gifts

**Gifts Received from
July 15 - August 15, 2021**

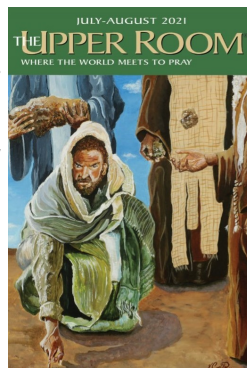
PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND
Ron Gentner Memorial
John Nimz Memorial

VIDEO MINISTRY FUND
Steve Eisele Memorial

**Gifts listed were received through
August 15, 2021**

Upper Room Devotional

The Upper Room has made their daily devotionals available as PDF for subscribing churches. 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.



NewsLetter
DEADLINE

September 15 is the deadline for items to be included in the October edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to: churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org

WORSHIP VOLUNTEER opportunities



Get Involved

with Worship!

Volunteers Needed

We need people to serve as liturgists, sound techs, and ushers now that we are back in-person. As well, we are in need of volunteers to open the church prior to 10:00 am worship service on Sundays. Please contact the office or people listed below for more information:

Liturgist: Jennifer Vasquez,

Email: jenniferavasquez29@gmail.com

Sound Tech: Gary Rogers,

Email: rogersg@courts.mi.gov

Usher: Jane Schmerberg,

Email: jmnmd@med.umich.edu

Church Opener: Bob Loukotka

Email: rloukotk@aol.com

We are in need of Sunday morning volunteers to work in the church office. The volunteer would need to arrive at 9:30am and stay until the service is concluded. If interested, please contact Tom Ziesemer at ziesemertn@gmail.com.



Bethlehem Cemetery Board Report

The summer agenda was to replace another section of asphalt which was done in July. A word of caution when parking your vehicle and walking to a grave site, please watch your step because this new layer of asphalt has a higher edge. Brad's crew is in the process of leveling out the area around the asphalt with dirt and grass seed.



Supper Club Returns!

CLUB

Have you been anxious to get together with your supper club again? Are you interested in joining in a social group with other members of the church? I would be happy to get us organized again and get things going. For those not familiar with this activity, groups typically meet once a month for a meal in member homes or in restaurants. While it's called a "Supper Club" many of us have gathered for brunch as well on the weekends! Please contact Jennifer Vasquez at jenniferavasquez29@gmail.com or 734-658-6692. To help me align the groups, I would like to know:

- ♦ How soon you would be comfortable getting together with others?
- ♦ Are you willing to meet in indoor locations as well as outdoors?
- ♦ Would you like to stay with the same group you were in previously or join a new group?
- ♦ How important is vaccination status of other group members to determine whether you will participate?
- ♦ Are you comfortable sharing your vaccination status with group members?

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.



Fall Sunday School

It has been since March of 2020 that we last had in-person Sunday school. The Education Ministry Team is working toward getting our children back together again in the future but are asking for input from our Bethlehem families.

Since the church has been reopened, we have made the nursery available for families to use but have not yet started Sunday school or preschool classes. With the new Covid-19 variants, we need to be even more cautious.

Masks are needed because children cannot yet be vaccinated and are increasingly more at risk for serious illness. We are seeking input from our parents about what they would like for this upcoming year. Things will likely evolve but we want to know what the families think.

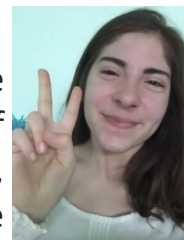
Please feel free to contact any member of the Education Ministry Team (EMT) group or the Chair, Eileen Koprowski. You can e-mail us at BUCC.education@bethlehem-ucc.org

In addition, we will soon post the position for a new Preschool teacher. Until it is filled, we will be counting on small core of teachers and parent volunteers. We likely will be functioning as a one-room Sunday school when we start. We have done this in the past, especially with special projects and holiday gatherings. It does have the advantage of letting our older children help teach the younger ones and lets siblings be together.



Celebrating Kelsey

On Sunday, July 18th, we celebrated four joyful years of service with our preschool teacher, Kelsey Postler. We wish Kelsey the best with her new nursing career at John Hopkins in Baltimore, MD. She will be deeply missed.



School Supply Drive

The school year is starting, and it is time for us to donate school supplies. We are collecting school supplies (notebooks, crayons, rulers, etc.) and backpacks for Peace Neighborhood Center and Ozone house. All supplies are welcome! There will be a box by the office. Monetary donations can be sent on-line or by check with "school supply donation" in the byline. Donations are due by Sunday, September 12.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

On Saturday, July 31st, a group of seven Bethlehem members (Katie Rowan, Jamie Raab, Brian Paton, Cresson Slotten, Edgar and Jennifer Vasquez, and Larisa Jaskiewicz) spent the day volunteering on a construction site with Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley on a Thrivent Venture Faith Build. The house which we were originally assigned to work on for the day wasn't at a good stage for a volunteer group, so Habitat sent us over to another house in Ypsilanti— 2754 Appleridge St. — an older house that Habitat is working on rehabilitating.

When we arrived, there was a professional crew on-site. They were finishing up digging a massive hole in the front yard, all the way down to the septic system, with an excavator. So while the pros worked on the hole, we did "light" exterior demolition work (tearing off old sheeting) and frame repairs with the supervision of our house leader Aaron. At lunchtime, Shannon and Pat O'Reilly stopped by with a nourishing spread of homemade pulled pork, pasta salad, and delicious cake (among other tasty things). They really spoiled us! After the restorative smorgasbord and visit with the O'Reillys, we went back to work. Under Aaron's supervision, we put orange fencing around the big stinky hole in the front yard to protect neighborhood children and critters. Safety first! We did more framing, put up new sheeting, and installed blue board. Despite the heat and humidity, we had quite a productive day!

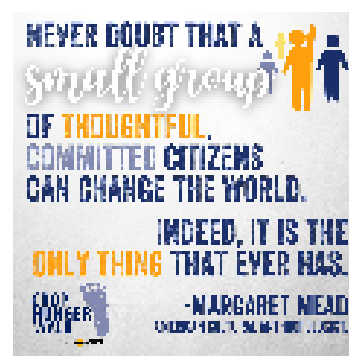
In addition to volunteering, we were able to bring a monetary donation of at least \$1500 from Bethlehem with us to present to Habitat— more than our fundraising goal! Thank you so much to all of you who donated, volunteered, prayed, fed, and supported us in this build day. Go Team Bethlehem!



Team Pillamas has set a goal of **\$3,600** for our congregation to raise for this year's CROP Walk!

Our team page has been set up...you can join to walk on **October 3** and/or make a contribution online. **Bethlehem is Host Church for this year's walk.**

Our Team Link



We appreciate your support!

Outreach Ministry Team News

Sunday, October 3

**Host Church:
Bethlehem UCC**

**The Walk begins
at 2:00 pm**



Walkers are welcome to meet at BUCC and walk with the group gathered. Or you can walk on your own wherever you choose.

WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS YEAR'S CROP WALK

1

JOIN THE BETHLEHEM TEAM: THE PLLAMAS

Register online at:

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/teams?event=annarbormi>

Click on our church name and then register to join our team!

2

MAKE A DONATION ONLINE FOR OUR TEAM

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/teams?event=annarbormi>

Click on our church name.

Make your donation!

3

MAKE A DONATION ONLINE ON OUR CHURCH WEBSITE

<https://bethlehem-ucc.org>

There is a line item titled "Crop Walk 2021"

Of you can drop off or send a check to the Church Office.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS OUT TO
"CHURCH WORLD SERVICE"**

The Pllamas Team has set a goal of **\$3,600** for our church to raise for the year's walk!



**"For now I ask no more
than the justice of
eating."**

—Pablo Neruda



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.

- ♦ 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.

**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.**

Staff, Ministry Team Chairs, and Leadership Council

Pastor: Rev. John Kennedy
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Orval L.E. Willimann
Minister of Spiritual Growth
and Development:
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

Finance: Karen Samford
Facilities: Steve Darr
Education: Eileen Koprowski
Worship: Jennifer Vasquez
Member Care: Beth Wenner (co-chair)
Karen Kennedy (co-chair)
Welcome: Jane Schmerberg
Outreach: Sue Muir/Roy Muir
Fellowship: Jan Eadie
Youth & Young Adult: Katie Rowan
Bethlehem Cemetery: Sue Buday
Nominations Committee: Cresson Slotten

President: Ron Dechert
Vice President: Jim Rowan
Secretary: Rachel Hemp
Treasurer: Pete Hendershot
At-Large Members:
 Dindy Haab
 Pat Huibregtse
 Pam Rutledge
Ex Officio: Rev. John Kennedy