



# The Visitor

October, 2021

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



## We Need Your Feedback

Dear Bethlehem,

Our by-laws describe an important function for our Leadership Council; strategic planning for the coming year and beyond.

In an effort to understand what you, as a member of our church family, identify as important issues facing Bethlehem now and into the future, we (Council) are seeking your feedback. In 2018, Council approved a congregational self-reflection tool which is sent to our members every three years. Your feedback, by completing this survey, is voluntary. The responses received will be tallied and shared with Leadership, Ministry team chairs, and you the congregation. We will use your feedback to develop a strategic plan for our church and church family. That strategic plan will also be shared with all of you.

Congregation self-reflection link

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeq0RKUZg\\_WVouVi\\_UFt9YS8yiFeiqraBNDIshFkahhcHEPhg/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeq0RKUZg_WVouVi_UFt9YS8yiFeiqraBNDIshFkahhcHEPhg/viewform?usp=sf_link)

*(continued on page 2)*

**Deadline for the  
November Edition of the  
Visitor is Friday, October 15**



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**BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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[www.bethlehem-ucc.org](http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org)  
[www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2](https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2)



## Office Hours

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

(continued from page 1)

To distribute this tool, I am posting this message in our refrigerator page this week. I will also be announcing it this Sunday at our service, and I will have some paper copies at our Sunday service if you prefer to complete it on paper. You can return your paper responses to the church office when completed. I am asking that one response per each individual person be submitted. If you would like a paper copy mailed to you instead of using the link attached, please contact the church office.

I am asking that all surveys be completed and returned by Sunday, October 17, 2021. This will allow time to summarize the responses received prior to our Leadership Council meeting on October 28, 2021.

Your feedback and willingness to complete this survey will be extremely useful to our Council and ministry teams for future strategic planning. As always, I am available if you have any concerns or questions. I can be most easily reached via email at [rdechert@umich.edu](mailto:rdechert@umich.edu).

God Bless You,  
Ron Dechert-President

### Police Chaplains Sworn In

The Swearing-in of the 4 new Ann Arbor Police Chaplains, at The Justice Center, this evening Sept 14th, 2021. This is part of the new "Faith & Blue" Initiative to use the Faith Community to help build bridges of understanding between the Ann Arbor Community and the Police Department. Each Chaplain is a pastor in the Washtenaw county area." (This is Pastor John's 3rd city and state in which he has served as a volunteer Police/Fire Chaplain)



### The Howard E. and Florence L. McKay Scholarship

Each year Bethlehem members who are enrolled as full-time students at an accredited college or university are invited to apply for a scholarship, funded by the income on the McKay Scholarship fund. This year the recipients are:

Brian Gotham - Michigan State University

Kelly Gotham – Hope College

Jacob Paton – University of Michigan

John Schenk - Michigan State University

Congratulations and best wishes for a good year to these deserving students.

—The BUCC Education Ministry Team



August 2021	Year to Date	YTD Target	2020/2021 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$148,698	\$126,651	\$506,604
Expenses	\$95,574	\$133,543	\$534,171
Net	\$52,124	(\$6,892)	(\$27,567)



## New Faces

Bethlehem members,

During our June congregational meeting, I stated that our current financial situation could not be sustained. I also stated that we need to increase our giving revenue and find renters for all of the space available in our building if we hope to continue as a downtown church. The five-year finance task force reviewed our previous financial performances and attempted to make projections for the next five fiscal years. Those projections indicated that we would exhaust 50% of our reserves over the next five years if we did not take action to start to reverse these trends.

As we entered our new fiscal year, we are pleased and appreciate your ongoing commitment for giving during the coming year. The pledges you give to the church represent the largest portion of our revenue each year. Due to COVID, we became aware that Ann Arbor Rec and Ed is not renting school spaces and we anticipated increased rental requests at Bethlehem. In addition, Pastor John and I began to work with a representative that connects faith-based groups who are looking for space to rent. We began negotiating with two start-up worship groups who wanted to rent space from us on Sunday mornings/afternoons. I am pleased to tell you that we have contracts (short and long-term) with both groups.

One group will be renting our Chapel and periodically using a classroom from 10:30-12:30 to hold their church service. This group is affiliated with the Pentecostal International Church and currently has approximately 20 total members including youth and adults. They will have a 1-year contract that will officially start on Sunday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, but will unofficially hold the first service on the preceding Sunday (Sept 26). We will be introducing members of this group to our congregation at the beginning of our service on Sept 26.

The second group will be renting our Fellowship Hall from 1-4pm on four upcoming Sundays. This group (GracePoint Ministries) is a campus based Christian group which is trying to do a start-up here at the University of Michigan. This group was originally founded in California on the campus of UC-Berkeley and has gradually spread throughout the west coast and to the east coast and are now making inroads in the Midwest (Purdue, Ohio State). If this group is successful, they may enter into a longer contract with our church for rental space. Pastor John and I have met on several occasions with both groups. We believe that this is an opportunity for our church and our congregation to support community faith-based groups and connect with those in these groups.

In addition, Julie (Parish Administrator) continues to receive new requests for space rental. We will continue to support these rental requests as much as possible. With this increase in rental activities, some of our budget line items will have a variance for this year. We will need to increase our custodial services which will increase our annual cost. We also may need additional volunteer help for sexton duties to open and close the building for our renters. I hope you will take the time to introduce yourself to our new renters if the opportunity presents itself. This is good news for our congregation. I hope you will join me in celebrating this news.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, thoughts, or concerns. I appreciate all of you who reach out to me with your questions and thoughts. I can be reached via email at [rdechert@umich.edu](mailto:rdechert@umich.edu).

God Bless You All,  
Ron Dechert-President

# HAPPENINGS



## 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



## WEEDS!!!

A church grounds clean-up day scheduled for Saturday, Oct 2nd from 9:00am - 12:00pm. This would include pulling weeds and cleaning up

the grounds.

As you may know, the Annual CROP Walk is scheduled on Sunday, October 3rd with Bethlehem UCC as the host and starting point. It would be great to have the area look nice.

If you have a few minutes of time to share, Facilities would appreciate some help. Thank you! — Tom Z



## Roundtable Pulpit

All are invited to participate in a "Roundtable Pulpit" with Pastor John on Tuesdays from 12-1:30 pm via [ZOOM](#). Gather to study and discuss the coming week's scripture. Please click on the link above if you would like to participate.

## Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received from  
August 16 - September 15, 2021

**VIDEO MINISTRY FUND**  
Steve Eisle Memorial

**RADIO BROADCAST**  
September 12 - In Memory of David Alber

Gifts listed were received through  
September 15, 2021

*Remembering  
Our Loved Ones*



## Totenfest Memorial Service Sunday, November 7 at 10:00 am Worship

At our Totenfest Memorial Service everyone will be invited to come forward to light a candle in memory of loved ones who have passed away.

In addition, we will have a special insert remembering all who have passed away since November 2020.

Please contact the church office by October 25 and let us know of any immediate family members you would like listed in our Totenfest Memorial insert. You may email the information to: churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org.

### Also

This year, in addition to names, we would like a picture of your loved one. If you want a picture, other than the one from their obituary, please let the office know. Thank you.



## It's FOOTBALL SEASON

which means

**FOOTBALL PARKING** in our church lot!



You can volunteer to help at

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

Volunteers are still need for the  
following Saturday home games:

- October 23 Time TBA
- November 6 Time TBA
- November 27 12:00 pm

*A great fundraiser  
for Bethlehem*

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

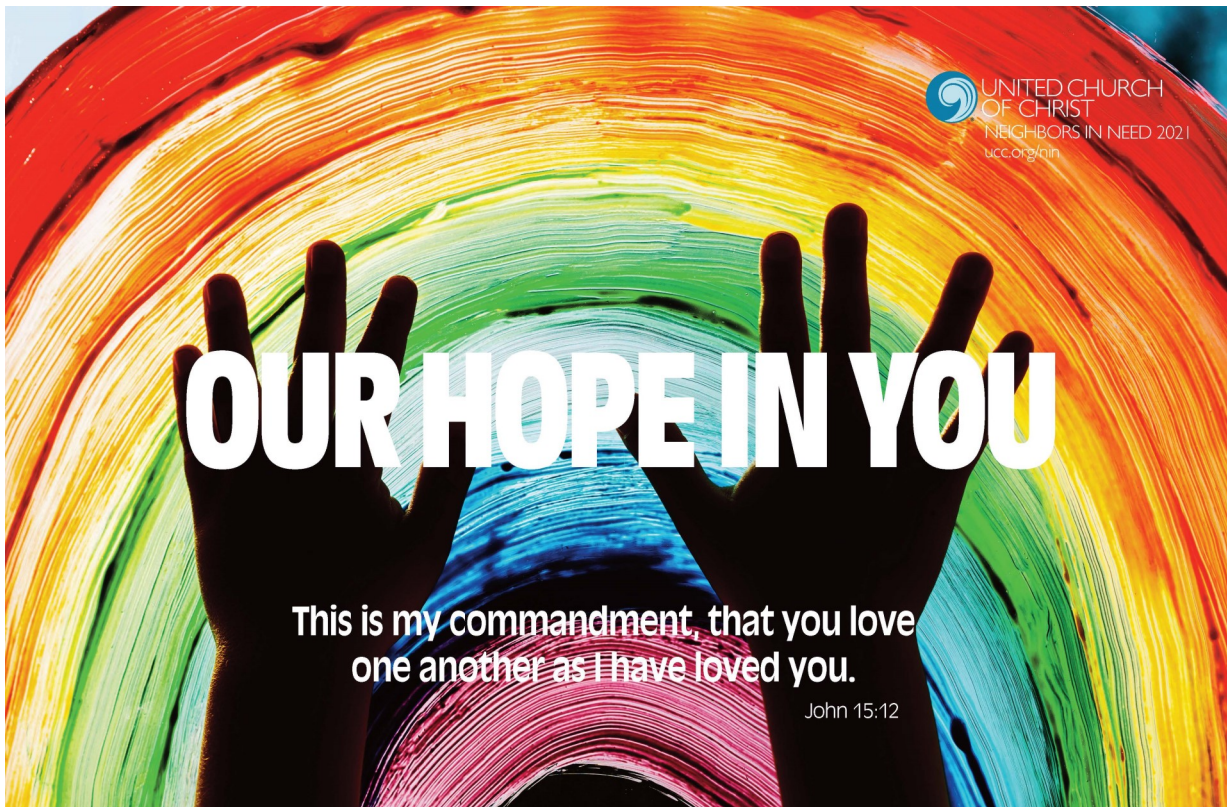


Hanging  
of the  
Greens

## Save the Date

Hanging of the Greens  
Saturday, November 20  
at 9:00 am





**October 3, 2021**

**Neighbors in Need** helps make **Unfailing Love** possible. For this to occur, it needs your support.

Please give generously. Contributions to "Neighbors in Need" can be made online at anytime by clicking the link [HERE](https://ucc.org/nin). Thank you for your support.



**Rise Up** and raise our voices in support of **permanent housing** for women, men, and non-binary persons.

**The National Coalition for the Homeless** categorizes homelessness into three types:

- 1 Chronic homelessness** are people who consider shelters as their permanent home rather than just an emergency arrangement.
- 2 Transitional homelessness** pertains to those who go to shelters for a short period of time before transitioning into a more stable home.
- 3 Episodic homelessness** are individuals who go in and out of the homeless situation due to their personal problems regarding mental health, unemployment, and substance abuse.

Did you know that approximately **17 people per 10,000** experience homelessness each day?



*"With 552,830 US individuals living in a state of homelessness, things are just not looking great. Still, it is a small percentage compared to the overall US population — which counts over 327.2 million."* (source: Whitehouse)

**A**s we begin to pivot away from a world too long shrouded under the grip of a pandemic, there will be those whose households were tragically impacted economically. **To that end, 2021 NIN grants will support the needs of the unhoused/homeless.**

For more information visit: <https://nationalhomeless.org/>

With your generous support, the UCC, through the 2021 NIN offering, helps its members live out their beliefs via acts of service.

Two-thirds of your donations to NIN support advocacy, programming, and grants. One-third of your generous gifts directly support CAIM.



[www.ucc.org/nin](https://www.ucc.org/nin). **Thank You!**





## Get Involved with Worship!

### Volunteers Needed

We need people to serve as liturgists, sound techs, and ushers now that we are back in-person. Please contact the office or people listed below for more information:

**Liturgist:** Jennifer Vasquez,

Email: [jenniferavasquez29@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferavasquez29@gmail.com)

**Sound Tech:** Gary Rogers,

Email: [rogersg@courts.mi.gov](mailto:rogersg@courts.mi.gov)

**Usher:** Jane Schmerberg,

Email: [jmnmd@med.umich.edu](mailto:jmnmd@med.umich.edu)

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](mailto:ziesemertn@gmail.com).



## 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](mailto: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.

## 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](http://bethlehem-ucc.org) or leave a message at the church office (734) 665-6149 and someone will get back with you.

## SHOWING UP

There is a difference between offering to help and showing up. Thank you to the following volunteers for showing up, again and again, to help with administrative and facilities tasks:

Steve Darr  
Ron Dechert  
Mike and Dindy Haab  
John and Susan Irwin  
Bob and Michelle Loukotka  
Paul Marshall  
John and Karen Samford  
Jim and Sallie Stadel  
Tom Ziesemer





## Youth at Bethlehem

The Youth had a laid back summer. We met every couple of weeks, alternating between zoom and in person games in the church yard. Youth also participated in intergenerational BUCculele jams, alternating between zoom and in person, or both at the same time! And thanks to Noah, who volunteered for a shift at Art Fair Parking!

Fall brings new energy and new activities! Our Youth Group Fall Kick Off was a pleasant afternoon at the Schmerberg's lake cottage. We enjoyed canoeing, swimming, jamming, and plenty of food! Movie night at the Bailey's backyard theater comes next, and then it's on to the return of All Church Pizza and Board Games, and the CROP walk.

In order to have programming for the Youth and comply with our Safe Church Policy, two adults must be present for youth activities. If you are interested in volunteering on a date when a second adult is needed, you can sign up here: [Youth Group Second Adult Sign Up](#). Thank you!



And the Youth are always hungry! If you could provide a meal, it would be greatly appreciated. You can sign up here: [Youth Group Meal Sign Up](#). Thank you! Thank you! Finally, the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team is looking for new members to help plan some awesome programming. If you would like to be involved, please contact Katie: [rowank55@gmail.com](mailto:rowank55@gmail.com)



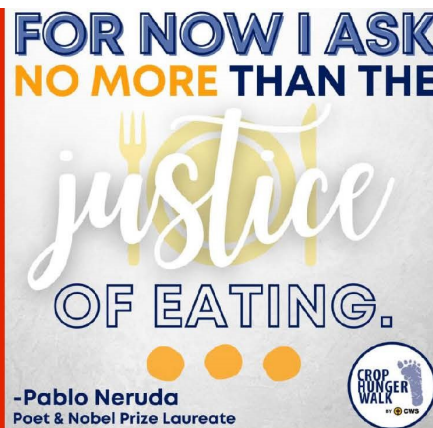
## CROP Walk

October 3, 2021  
2:00 pm

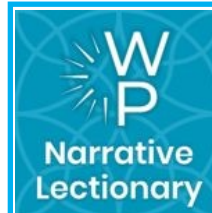
Walk starts at Bethlehem UCC  
423 S. Fourth Avenue

### WAYS TO SUPPORT TEAM PLLAMAS:

1. Make a donation or join our team at:  
<http://bethlehem-ucc.org>  
Click on EVENTS to go to our Team Page or click on GIVING to donate.
2. Join the Walk on October 3!  
Meet us on the front lawn of our church or walk wherever you feel most comfortable!
3. Donate with a check made out to Church World Service and drop it off or mail it to the Church Office.



ENDING HUNGER  
ONE STEP  
AT A TIME  
CROP HUNGER WALK



## Narrative Lectionary Resource

Beginning on September 12, 2021, we started utilizing the **Narrative Lectionary** for the scripture readings for upcoming worship services. Please click this [LINK](#) to connect to the Narrative Lectionary to see the scheduled readings and themes for services for the upcoming year.



## There is a role for everyone in the fight against hunger. BETHLEHEM'S FALL VOLUNTEER DAY AT FOODGATHERER'S WAREHOUSE!

We are back on board to have a group from our congregation volunteer at Carrot Way on Saturday, **November 13 from 9:30-11:30!**

Follow this simple link to sign up:

[Food Gatherers Carrot Way Sign Up](#)



October 15 is the deadline for items to be included in the November edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to:  
[churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org)



**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**