



# The Visitor

December, 2021  
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



## No Fighting Around the Manger

Isaiah 11:6-9

God is always pregnant with possibilities especially in times of tribalism and division. The setting is a time of extreme hardship, The Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) has been conquered by the Assyrians. Assyria and Israel, are now together attacking the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). King David and King Solomon's once unified "One nation under God" has been fractured and will never again be united.

The prophet Isaiah, is sharing the news that Judah will not be utterly wiped out (like Israel) because God will save a small remnant from Judah (King David's father, Jesse) and rebuild a new kingdom that is focused on love of God, and neighbor, with wisdom, and justice. (Isaiah 11:1-5)

*A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;  
a branch will sprout from his roots.*

**The LORD's Spirit will rest upon him,**  
*a spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**,  
a spirit of **counsel** and **strength**,  
a spirit of **knowledge** and fear of the LORD.*

*He will delight in fearing the LORD.*

*He will **not judge** by **appearances**,  
**nor** decide by **hearsay**.*

*He will judge the needy with **righteousness**,  
and decide with **equity** for those who suffer in the land.*

*He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth;  
by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.*

**Righteousness** will be the belt around his hips,  
and **faithfulness** the belt around his waist.

(continued on page 2)

**Deadline for the January  
Edition of the Visitor is  
Wednesday, December 15**



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**BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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## Office Hours

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

*(continued from page 1)*

Isaiah, declares that this King's name will be "Emmanuel" (God with us) and that he will come as a little child, "for unto us a child is born, a child is given" (Isaiah 9:6-7). This child will come to the Prince of Wholeness (Shalom=peace deep in the core of our being).

This kind of peace, however, can only be a reality in our lives, families, and faith community when we each "get real" with God, ourselves and each other. We each have to make a decision every day, with whom our ultimate obedience, trust, and loyalty reside. We must prepare a nursery in our hearts to welcome the Christ child. Making room and preparing the nursery of our own hearts to receive the Christ Child of Shalom shapes how we let Christ peace grow in us. This requires us to each own our own thoughts, behaviors, and the energy we bring into every space we enter. We are responsible for our own feelings and the negative or positive energy we bring or share. I was stunned to learn during a Sunday service of worship for Totenfest, that there were church members who refused to return "The Peace Christ" to those who had extended an expression of Christ's Peace to them, first. I know of no Biblical basis for this behavior in the midst of our place of sanctuary, and during the worship of God, and the Prince of Peace.

We are each responsible for the energy we bring into any space we enter! Grace upon grace have been shared with us by a loving God, and others even when we have not earned or deserve it. That's what makes it grace. There were some who refused the Sacrament of Holy Communion, because they were angry and not at peace with other individuals. The Christ Child grew up to be one who shared the Last Supper with the very disciples who would abandon and betray him and yet he built the Church with those same people with the power of God's grace and forgiveness. To welcome the Christ Child, into the nursery of our hearts this Advent, we cannot at the same time be Fighting around the Manger. Those who gather around the manger on that night long ago (Young unwed parents, Shepherds, and even animals) all stood in awe at the side of the grace and peace that had entered our space in this world in a small child. In love and expectation, God is watching us as we watch and prepare for the Christ child. What gifts and energy will we bring into this time and space?

*"The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little Child will lead them.*

<sup>7</sup> *The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.*

<sup>8</sup> *A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;  
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.*

<sup>9</sup> ***They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.***  
*The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD,  
just as the water covers the sea. (Isaiah 11: 6-9)*

Christ, came into the world to make us whole and to show us how to love God, and each other, right here and right now. Like those long ago let us have no fighting around the manger but instead glory at the gift of Emmanuel, God with us!

God loves us All with no take-backs!

Pastor John

October 2021	Year to Date	YTD Target	2020/2021 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$219,500	\$211,085	\$506,604
Expenses	\$166,503	\$222,571	\$534,171
Net	\$52,998	(\$11,486)	(\$27,567)



## Looking Forward

Dear Bethlehem Family,

As I write this month's message, I find myself looking forward to the coming holidays and the festivities that come along. First up is Thanksgiving, which brings with it great food, family fellowship, and fun. It is also a time we are reminded to reflect on our own lives and to offer Thanks and celebrate what we have to be thankful for.

What do we, as a church family, have to be thankful for? I can think of many things we can be thankful for coming through the past 18 months in relatively good health. We can also be thankful for Pastor John and our leadership across all levels of our church. We can be thankful for all the work that has and continues to be done in the support of our building and our members. Our church staff and volunteers have supported the day-to-day operations. They have worked diligently to support and communicate with our members. Facilities and our Parish Administrator, Julie Rhodes, have continued to coordinate numerous contractors who serviced our beautiful building. We can be thankful for the increase use of our building this year through ongoing rentals. We can be thankful for the work done by our worship ministry team, Parish Administrator, Pastor John, and Director of Music, David Hahn for moving so quickly to initiate and install our live streaming program, all the while working with Leadership Council to move forward with structured re-opening of our in-person services. There are many, many acts that are being performed daily behind the scenes by numerous staff and volunteers that continues to keep our congregation moving forward. To all those working to move our congregation forward, I want to sincerely say, Thank You.

My friends, we at Bethlehem need to CELEBRATE and be thankful for all we have. We need to embrace the gifts we receive from each other and offer grace.

As I look forward to the coming holidays, I have faith in our church family that we will all come together through love. I also have hope that we will comfort and support each other and heal as a congregation.

I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving holiday and joyous Christmas season. As always, I am available for comments or questions. I can be reached via email at [rdechert@umich.edu](mailto:rdechert@umich.edu)

God Bless You All,  
Ron Dechert-President



As I leave my employment with the church in December, I want to thank the staff and volunteers who worked closely with me. Together, we accomplished much to support

Bethlehem UCC and I will miss you.

Betty Clark and Gwen Mayes – staff

Volunteers: Steve Darr, Ron Dechert,

Mike and Dindy Haab, John and Susan Irwin,

Bob and Michelle Loukotka, John and Karen Samford,

Jim Stadel, Jesse Wilcox, Tom Ziesemer

Merry Christmas and best wishes for good health and happiness in 2022!

**Julie Rhodes**

## 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.*

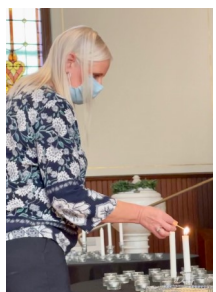
- Click [here](#) to go to Sign-Up Genius and choose a date, and how you want your sponsorship to read.
- You can donate online at: [bethlehem-ucc.org](http://bethlehem-ucc.org) or leave a message at the church office (734) 665-6149 and someone will get back with you.

# HAPPENINGS

## Totenfest 2021



- Wednesdays, 4:30 PM BUCCuLeles via [ZOOM](#)
- Thursday, Nov. 18, 6:30 - 8 pm All Church Pizza and Board Games
- Thursday, Nov. 25 No Youth Group
- Thursday, Dec. 2, 6:30 - 8 pm Youth Group
- Wednesday, Dec. 8, 6 - 9 pm Cantata Rehearsal
- Thursday, Dec. 9, 6:30 - 8 pm Youth Group
- Friday, Dec. 10, 6 - 9 pm Cantata Rehearsal
- Saturday, Dec. 11, 10 am - 3 pm Cantata Rehearsal
- Thursday, December 16, 6:30 - 8 pm All Church Pizza and Board Games
- Wednesday, Dec. 22, 6 - 9 pm Christmas Eve Rehearsal
- Thursday, Dec. 23, 6 - 9 pm Christmas Eve Rehearsal
- Thursdays, Dec. 23, No Youth Group
- Friday, Dec. 24, 5:00 & 7 pm Christmas Eve Worship
- Thursday, Dec. 30 No Youth Group



### BUCCuLeles

Our very own ukulele band will be starting up again for jam sessions. We'll be meeting on Zoom, Wednesdays at 4:30PM.



<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71073058780?pwd=bHBSbzdkNTBqTkFSWEN3b2hUL1lwUT09>

Meeting ID: 710 7305 8780

Passcode: X7E1dG



### Bethlehem Veterans' & Friends Monthly Breakfast

Friday, December 3  
at 8:30 am

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

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

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



### 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.

*We remember our loved ones who passed away this year. They will forever be in our hearts.*

*David Alan Beagle*

*Robert Dylenski*

*Thomas Folk*

*Rev. Kenneyon Edwards*

*Suzanne Waltjen*

*Joan L. Schultz*

*Betty M. Lardas*

*Janice Leonard*

*Steve Eisele*

*Murray Smith*

*Karen E. Jahnke*

*Grace Haab Randol*

*Gary A. Lucas*

*Janet Avery*



## **CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES**



**Friday, December 24  
Christmas Eve**

**5:00 PM**

**A family-centered Candlelight  
Service of Lessons & Carols  
featuring a telling of the  
Christmas story**

**7:30 PM**

**A Candlelight Service of Lessons  
& Carols and a musical  
celebration featuring the  
Bethlehem Chancel Choir and  
Bethlehem Hand Bells**

## **Welcome Home Basket Collection for the Pattersons**

In conjunction with our volunteer day with Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley a few months ago, we are collecting donations to put towards a welcome home basket for the Pattersons. The basket "theme" will be general household items, including but not limited to:

- Towels
- Tupperware
- Cleaning supplies
- Garbage can
- Other home essential items

We are also collecting monetary donations to go towards a Target gift card. Any donations can be turned in to the church office through November 28. Items brought during the week can be dropped off Tues. - Fri. 9:30 to 2:00. Please include "Habitat Welcome Basket" in the check memo. Let's give thanks for all we have by helping welcome the Pattersons into their new home!

[www.H4H.org/thrivent](http://www.H4H.org/thrivent)



**The Patterson Family**



Sharese Patterson is the mother of three young adults and one child. She's a nursing assistant at St. Joe's Hospital and is currently in school obtaining her nursing degree. Her kids are Jason, 21, Ayana, 17, Deshawn, 16 and Keris, 9.

### **Their Future Home w/BUCC Volunteers**



- 835 Lamay Ave., Ypsilanti
- 1,335 square feet; 3 bedroom; 1 bath; basement; detached shed
- To be completely renovated to be energy efficient

## Volunteering for Food Gatherers

Thanks to Kathy, Dave, Ellie, Eleanore and Katie who volunteered at the Carrot Way Food Gatherers Warehouse on November 13. We were happy to be able to resume in person volunteering to complement our congregation's continued monetary support throughout the pandemic. We also look forward to the return of the food barrels to the BUCC library, so we can bring in our food donations.

Our volunteer shift came with a tour of the warehouse facility and here are some of the things we learned:

Pre-pandemic, Food Gatherers typically distributed 6 million pounds of food per year in Washtenaw county. During the pandemic that yearly amount increased to 9 million pounds.

In addition to receiving donated and rescued food that would otherwise have been wasted, Food Gatherers purchases food such as meats and non perishables in bulk. Since they can purchase in such large quantities, every dollar provides 6 meals.

Sixty percent of Food Gatherers' operations are completed by volunteers. During our group's 2 hour shift, we were able to rescue 1814 pounds of food.

Our next Carrot Way volunteer opportunity will be Sat. Feb. 19, 9:30 - 11:30 AM. Ages 8 and older welcome! You can sign up here: [Food Gatherers Carrot Way Sign Up](#)



## Youth Group

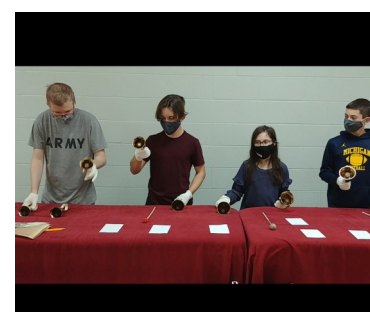
Halloween was the perfect fall day for the Youth's outing to Blast Corn Maze. In addition to a foray into the muddy maze, we enjoyed the festive decorations, farm animals, hayride, "cow train" ride, corn cannon, and snacks.

Bethlehem Bell Choir director, Jim Rowan, was our guest for our first November meeting and introduced the group to the handbells and chimes. He showed everyone various playing techniques and led a rendition of Happy Birthday. Our ever creative Youth figured out some tunes on their own, including Theme from Jurassic Park.

The Youth invite the congregation to join us for All Church Pizza and Boardgames:

- Thursday, Nov. 18, 6:30 - 8 PM, Youth Room
- Thursday, Dec. 16, 6:30 - 8 PM, Youth Room

Youth Group now meets on Thursdays, 6:30 - 8 PM, in the youth room. Since this coincides with dinner time, we will gratefully accept donated dinners! If you could prepare a meal for the Youth, please sign up here: [Youth Group Dinner Sign Up](#)



In honor of Veterans Day on November 11th we would like to acknowledge those Bethlehem UCC Veterans that are still among us that gave their time serving our country.

## Bethlehem UCC Armed Forces Veterans

Mike Ehnis	US Army	1963 – 1971
Jack Erwin	US Army	1960 – 1962
Dave Gilmore	US Army	1970 – 1972
Roger Hoxie	US Army	1967 – 1969
		1989 – 2005 Ret.
Dennis Huibregtse	US Army	1971 – 1976
Jim Judson	US Army	1969 - 1971
Ron Karr	US Army	1968 – 1970
John Kennedy	US Army	1980 – 1982
Scott Lovelace	US Army	1970 – 1976
Gary Maki	US Army	1970 – 1973
Paul Neeb	US Army	1954 – 1956
Jerry Sutfin	US Army	1957 – 1962
Carl Waltjen	US Army	1956 – 1959
		1961 – 1964
Norm Wetzel	US Army	1968 – 1970
Jesse Wilcox	US Army	2008 – 2015
Tom Zieseimer	US Army	1966 – 1969
Jim Aldrich	US Air Force	1963 – 1969
Mike Haab	US Air Force	1965 – 1969
Larry Katz	US Air Force	1957 – 1960
Kristine Marshall	US Air Force	1989 – 1994
Gary Dresselhouse	US Marines	1954 – 1956
John Fischer	US Marines	1945 – 1946
Eugene Alber	US Navy	1949 – 1953
Jay Katz	US Navy	1955 – 1967
Bob Loukotka	US Navy	1961 – 1966 Ret. 1988
Jim Stadel	US Navy	1969 – 1973







## News From the Education Ministries Team

The Education Ministry Team (EMT) and your Sunday school teachers continue to meet. We want all our families know that our youth continue to be a priority for our church. Our children are our most precious commodity.

While it is wonderful to have Bethlehem services back in the sanctuary, we are not ready to have in-person Sunday school just yet. Given the continued uncertainties with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not yet safe to have our children back in our classrooms. While some children are now eligible for vaccines, not all are able to get a vaccine.

There is a fair amount of asymptomatic spread contributing to the current surge of cases and hospitalization. There also continues to be Bethlehem members that have contracted Covid-19 despite all precautions. Thus, in talking with our teachers and families, we will continue to take a cautious approach and wait until it is safer.

We still want to stay connected and plan to send out treats and activities to our families for Thanksgiving and Advent. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns about our decision to delay the start. All ideas about how we can safely interact and stay in touch are appreciated.

Every year for the holidays, our youth have spear-headed holiday giving to those in need. This year EMT is partnering with the Youth and Young Adult and Outreach Ministry Teams to help guide Christmas giving. There will be opportunities to contribute to Peace Neighborhood, Alpha House and Food Gatherers virtually. We hope there will be ways to donate monetary contributions, gift cards and even help pay for wish list items.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all our children and families. We hope you all have wonderful holidays and that we will be able to be together soon.

Seasons Blessings!

Eileen Koprowski - Chairperson

Jan Eadie,

Julie Feldman,

Wanda Modica,

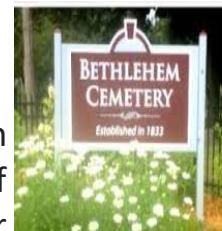
Nancy Pieske,

Karen Samford,

Jane Schmerberg,

Christina Wilk

## From the Bethlehem Cemetery Board



Please remember Bethlehem Cemetery when making any of your end of the year donations or RMDs/Qualified Charitable Distributions. These gifts to Bethlehem Cemetery are greatly appreciated!

Merry Christmas Everyone from your Cemetery Board.

## Memorials and Gifts Gifts Received from October 16 - November 15, 2021

**GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND**  
Janice Leonard Memorial

**PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND**  
John O'Reilly Memorial

**BETHLEHEM CEMETERY MAINTENANCE**  
John Nimz Memorial

**SOCK & MITTEN TREE**  
Vicki (Sam) Hoxie Honorarium  
Gary Lucas Memorial

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



We are now live streaming our 10:00 am Worship Service on Sundays. You can click the link [HERE](#) to be taken directly to the BUCC website so that you can watch services.



# Outreach Holiday Appeals 2021

It's that time of the year when we begin thinking of ways our congregation can "reach out" to our local agencies to help children and families during the Holiday Season. **OUTREACH MINISTRY, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS, and EDUCATION MINISTRY TEAMS** are joining together this year to promote these appeals.

## Peace Neighborhood Center



Peace plans to promote the following ways to help out:

- \*Amazon Wish List
- \*Gift Cards

Please visit their website, beginning mid-November, to find out how you can make a difference in the lives of the children and families that are part of the Peace Family.

**[PNC Link](#)**

## Alpha House



Alpha House shelters between 50-60 families each year. During the holidays, they plan to offer these opportunities to help out:

- \*Gift Cards
- \*Gifts
- \*Kids Holiday Stockings
- \*Blessing Basket Items

Please visit the link below, beginning mid-November, to find out how you can help.

**[Alpha House Link](#)**

## Food Gatherers



Food Gatherers continues to need donations of money and food to help access affordable, healthy food for Washtenaw County. There were an estimated 42,450 persons in 2021 facing food scarcity in our community. Our gifts of food and money can help eliminate hunger in Washtenaw County.

**[Food Gatherers](#)**



## 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:  
 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: 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: Marty Seyfried  
 Nominations Committee: Cresson Slotten

### LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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