

# The Visitor

August 2023  
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



*"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." (Matthew 6:25 & 34)*

## Beloved ones,

Do you find comfort in Jesus' words? I hope so. But I'm guessing that some of you may be reading his last sentence and thinking – "Today's trouble?! I'm (we're) drowning here! When will the chaos ever end??" Truly, some of life's seasons can be VERY hard, especially when we find ourselves in a transitional season – unable to turn back, uncertain about what the future holds, unable to see through the 'fog' of today, and maybe feeling lost in a wilderness experience with seemingly no way out. Don't worry, Jesus? Sorry, we're human. Worry goes with the territory. My friends, whatever you're feeling right now, (sorrow, fear, anger, hopelessness, etc.) it's where you are and that's okay. Hold on. We'll get through this, TOGETHER.

You know, in the short eleven days that I've been with you, I have felt your anxiety, your worry, your pain, and your grief. And I know that I have so very much yet to learn about you – so much yet to triage. Yes, over the next several months, I will be in triage-mode, assessing this Body of Christ, person by person and team by team. I will render first aid when and where it is needed, all with the goal of stabilizing you. Short-term and long-term treatment plans will be developed, implemented and adjusted as we move along, to promote your healing and strength. And as Jesus said, don't worry. While you may feel awful, Bethlehem UCC does not have a life-threatening condition. You will recover and flourish once again, likely in new and amazing ways!

And that is not my opinion alone. Even our Conference Minister, Lillian Daniel, believes that. When she and I spoke earlier this week about Conference and Association matters, we also spoke about you and the great future ahead of you. 190 years and counting! Rev. Daniel sends you her love and prayers.

Be of good cheer! Have hope in the Lord who loves you, and who calls you to ministry. I know, for some of you, you're hanging on to hope by your fingernails. Honestly, sometimes hope is a leap of faith, trusting in the One who created us, who loves us unconditionally, and who walks with us through all of the ups and downs of life. One of the most beautiful expressions of hope that I have ever read was inscribed on a cellar wall in Cologne Germany, during WWII. It was written by Jews in hiding. Their beautiful words were captured many decades later in a choral piece called Inscription of Hope. I'm sharing those words with you, praying that the Spirit will carry them deep into your hearts and give you hope akin to those who originally inscribed them.

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I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining  
and I believe in love, even when there's no one there  
and I believe in God, even when He is silent

I believe through any trial, there is always a way.  
But sometimes in this suffering and hopeless despair  
my heart cries for shelter to know someone's there.  
But a voice rises within me saying 'hold on my child'

I'll give you hope  
I'll give you strength  
Just stay a little while.

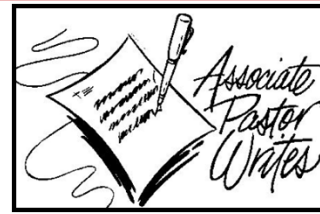
I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining  
and I believe in love, even when there's no one there  
and I believe in God, even when He is silent  
I believe through any trial, there is always a way.

May there someday be sunshine.  
May there someday be happiness.  
May there someday be love.  
May there someday be peace.

Trust. Believe. The sun will shine again. Your hearts will  
be filled with joy again. God's love for you will never end  
and will fill your hearts to overflowing. And just as Jesus  
calmed the wind and the waves, peace will rule the day.  
Let's be like the original Old Navy –

1 Savior, 12 disciples and a fishing boat. No worries.  
That's a boat I want to be in. How about you?

*Grace & Peace, Pastor Dawn*



Going to church doesn't make  
you any more a Christian than  
going to the garage makes  
you a car.  
Your beliefs don't make you  
a better person, your behavior does.  
Your words mean nothing if your  
actions are the complete opposite.  
Having true faith in whatever it  
is you believe must be shown through  
actions, believing is only half the battle.  
Let your dreams be bigger than your fears,  
your actions louder than your words,  
and your faith stronger than your feelings.

Dear Friends in Christ,

I recently received this poster electronically. The first line really captured my attention. It caused me to think about the diversity in all who call themselves Christian in the world. It caused me to think, "Who am I as a Christian?" Do my words and actions follow our Lord and Savior? Do I share the Word and invite others to join me on this journey of the Way? Do I forgive others as I have been forgiven? Do I forgive myself? Do I love as Jesus loved?

We are the Church and Jesus is the head of this church called Bethlehem. How do we live this out in all we do together? Can we come together in love always even when we disagree, even when we fear, even when we are unsure of the future? Can we have faith to dream bigger than our fears, to let our actions communicate our love for all others? Can we let the light of Jesus' love shine through us even when we park cars or roll pretzels or greet each

other on Sunday morning or walk down the street? Of course, we are able, and we will if we make the choice and set our hearts in God. "With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

Christ's peace be with you,

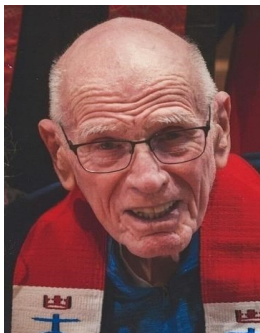
*Pastor Diane*

## In Loving Memory of

**Reverend Orval Willimann**

**Pastor Emeritus at**

**Bethlehem UCC, Ann Arbor 1974-1998**



**February 12, 1933 - June 30, 2023**

**May You Rest In Peace**



## Council Updates- August 2023



Dear Bethlehem Members and Friends,

Recently Pastor Dawn commented to me that there are many moving parts here at Bethlehem, this is a very honest and correct statement. Bethlehem has historically been blessed with committed members who volunteered for elected and non-elected roles. Our current governance structure relies significantly on the involvement of our members. It is through this laity-led structure that most of the church business is done. It is true that we have seen significant reductions in the number of volunteers, year-over-year, who support the work of this congregation. There is always room and need for more volunteers. We currently do not have chairs for Outreach, Fellowship, Worship, and Nominations. In addition, we do not have a Council Secretary, although Council continues to discuss this position with members who might be interested. Nonetheless, the many activities of Bethlehem continue. If you could help as a volunteer, please contact any member of Council or myself ([rdechert@umich.edu](mailto:rdechert@umich.edu)), we would be happy to direct you to the right contact person. We need volunteers not only for our ministry teams, but also for recurring functions like; liturgist, usher, office support, live streaming, to name a few.

I am writing today to update our members and friends on specific topics that came up during our annual meeting in June. The status of the Hewett St parsonage was one topic. Our members directed Council to gather additional information regarding the possible options (rent or sell). A follow-up congregational meeting was held July 9<sup>th</sup> to allow the congregation to vote on these options. The congregation voted to retain the parsonage and to partner with Reinhart Realty to get the house ready to rent in September. The timeline is very tight so we must move as quickly as possible to address all of the items identified by both Reinhart and the Ann Arbor City inspector. We hope to have the house ready and rented in September.

At the annual meeting we also heard from Facilities about a new State law that would impact our elevator and our operating budget. The new law requires a special safety breaking system to be installed on all elevators. The estimated cost for that retrofitting of our elevator was reported as \$30,000. The deadline identified in the original communication was June 2024. Effort was made to seek deferment or waiver for this given the significant cost without any response from the state. We have also tried to identify grant sources which may cover this expense without success to date. Earlier this week, we received communication from our elevator repair company that the State of Michigan postponed the deadline until 2027. We are happy with this decision but we will need to budget for it a few years from now.

Finally, at the start of this month our new interim pastor (Rev. Dawn Christenson) began her leadership here at Bethlehem. Reverend Dawn brings tremendous energy to her new (for us) position. She has been making efforts to meet as many members and to attend as many ministry team meetings as possible. At present, Rev. Dawn will be keeping office hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Should you or someone you know need spiritual support from Rev. Dawn, please contact the church office. She can also be reached through text messaging. The church office can provide you with the contact information.

God Bless You All, for all you do and bring to Bethlehem.

Ron Dechert-President

## Memorials and Gifts

### Gifts Received June 1 - July 15

#### GENERAL MEMORIAL RUND

Rev. Orval Willimann

**Gifts listed were received through  
July 15, 2023**



## HOMEBOUND FRIENDS

We have many dear friends who remain home-bound and they would love to see you and/or hear from you.

If you would like names and contact information, please reach out to Pastor Diane who can share that with you.

## "The Christian Church was born in song."

- Ralph P. Martin



Hello Bethlehem singers! It is soon this exciting time of the year, the Bethlehem Chancel Choir will be resuming at the beginning of

September!

Our first choir rehearsal will be 7 – 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 6th, in the sanctuary (with the A/C!). On Sunday morning, we have a brief warm-up at 9:15 a.m.

EVERYONE is welcome to participate in this wonderful music ministry, to lead worship, to enjoy fellowship, and to experience God's love and grace in our lives through the gift of music. If you have any question, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Naki Kripfgans (Director of Music Ministries and Organist) at:

[musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org).



## Greeting from the Bethlehem Cemetery

It is great pride we announce the celebration of 190 years of bringing community together, ministering to those far and wide on our property at 2801 Jackson Rd. Ann Arbor.



On Sunday August 26, 1833 thirteen families from Germany worshiped for the first time together in a small log cabin with their pastor Rev. Friedrich Schmid. Not long after, the first burial took place in the Church yard, and Bethlehem Evangelical Church and Bethlehem Cemetery began.

As we approach the bicentennial, in just 10 years, we would like to invite members, friends, and the community to visit the original site in the afternoon of the Sunday closest to the original date; this year on Sunday, August 27, 2023 in the afternoon.

We hope you will join us as you are able to attend as many of the next years as possible, and then the bicentennial celebration on August 28, 2033.

When you join us on the afternoon of Sunday August 27, you will see the original place of that log cabin, experience the scriptures used that first Sunday, and share your prayers with others.

More details are forthcoming, please save the date!

Glory to God alone!

Your Bethlehem Cemetery Board and Advisors

## Current Fiscal Year

June, 2023	Year to Date	YTD Target	23 /24 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$30,157	\$32,614	\$391,370
Expenses	\$22,168	\$40,296	\$483,556
Net	\$7,989	(\$7,682)	(\$92,186)

## End of Previous Fiscal Year

May 2023	Year to Date	YTD Target	22 /23 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$349,398	\$400,020	\$400,020
Expenses	\$501,781	\$534,128	\$534,128
Net	(\$152,383)	(\$134,108)	(\$134,108)



# BUCC HAPPENINGS



August 2

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon

August 4

- Bethlehem Veterans & Friends Monthly Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 8:30 am

August 6 Communion Sunday

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

August 8

- Bethlehem Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 9:30 am
- Facilities Ministry Team, Lounge 3:30 pm

August 9

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:00 am
- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon

August 13

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

August 16

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon
- Member Care Ministry, Lounge, 4:00 pm

August 20

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

August 23

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon

August 24

- Worship at Brecon Village, 10:00 am
- Leadership Council, Lounge, 6:00 pm

August 27

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

August 30

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon

*Thank You!!!*

Facilities Ministry Team would like to thank Tom Ziesemer, John Irwin, and Jim Stadel for fixing the big fan in the Sanctuary June 29, 2023



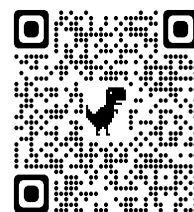
**It's almost FOOTBALL SEASON**

which means

**FOOTBALL PARKING**

**in our church lot!**

Do you like welcoming people? Enjoy the excitement of game day? Interested in earning money for church activities? Please help by signing up for a volunteer parking shift for a home football game. Follow the link below or scan the QR code to our Sign-up Genius page. Shifts begin approximately 4 hours prior to the start of the game. Two volunteers are needed per shift. Shifts are typically 3 hours long but can be shorter if the lot fills quickly. If you have never done this before Jennifer Vasquez will provide more details and will meet you at the start of your shift to help you set up. Thank you!



**You can volunteer to help at**

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

**Home games are these Saturdays:**

- |                |          |
|----------------|----------|
| • September 2  | 12:00 pm |
| • September 9  | 3:30 pm  |
| • September 16 | 7:30 pm  |
| • September 23 | 12:00 pm |
| • October 14   | Time TBA |
| • November 4   | Time TBA |
| • November 25  | 12:00 pm |

*A great fundraiser  
for Bethlehem*



## Cemetery Road Maintenance

Bethlehem Cemetery, 2801 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor, is having major repair work to the driveways winding through the facility over the coming months. The Cemetery Board takes the upkeep of the 190 year old cemetery very seriously so visitors experience the most respectful and tranquil environment. If you would like to contribute to the road improvement fund, or have general questions, contact us at [bucc.cemetery@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:bucc.cemetery@bethlehem-ucc.org). The property will remain open during all work.





Please make sure that the office receives all **Refrigerator Page and Email Blast** submissions by **12:00 pm Wednesday each week.** **August 15** is the deadline for items to be included in the September edition of the **VISITOR** newsletter.

Please email submissions to:

**churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org**



### 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

# OUTREACH NEWS

Outreach Ministry Team - Bethlehem United Church of Christ

As the 2022-23 Fiscal Year for Bethlehem comes to a close, we want to thank everyone who supported the Outreach Ministry Team's efforts this year with both monetary contributions and volunteering.

#### Here is a recap of some of the highlights of the activities of this year's OMT efforts:

- Habitat for Humanity - Huron Valley: \$1,336
- Participated in CROP Walk 2022 and raised - \$3,695
- From Bethlehem's Operating Budget - dispersed to Peace Neighborhood Center, Alpha House & Food Gatherers: \$4,000 each
- Education Ministry Team (with support from OMT) for the SCS Lenten Project - AAPS Support Students Fund: \$3,925
- Provided meals for Alpha House on a Sunday in August (2022) and January (2023) Our next time to provide a meal is in May.
- Meals prepared the first Sunday of every month at the Community Kitchen thanks to Ron & Alice Dechert, Jamie Dylenski, Tom Ziesemer, Marty & Laura Seyfried for volunteering.
- Volunteers helped weekly on Fridays at Peace Neighborhood Center with food distributions (special thanks to Katie Rowan, Kathy Warner, Dave Gilmore, Sue Muir for volunteering weekly).
- Volunteers helped at Food Gatherers Warehouse on a Saturday in June (2022)
- The war in Ukraine prompted our team to establish an appeal to raise monies for Ukrainian refugees. Women of Bethlehem presented a check for \$5,000 for this endeavor and a challenge for the congregation to match their gift. To date, a total of \$11,105 has been raised!

We are grateful this past year for the dedication of our OMT members: Jane Schmerberg, Eileen Koprowski, Mary Jean Raab, Jamie Dylenski, Laura Seyfried, Katie Rowan, and Sue Wortman. Ron Dechert attended our meetings as the Leadership Council liaison.

Roy and Sue Muir, Co-Chairs



### Adopt-a-Coffee Hour

What better way to enjoy the company of your fellow church members than over a good cup of coffee? We are looking for two volunteers a week to adopt-a-coffee hour

on Sundays after the 10:00 am worship service in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers will need to set up, make coffee and clean up. Please click the link [HERE](#) to be taken to the Sign Up Genius website where you can choose your slot. Your willingness to participate in this act of fellowship is sincerely appreciated.



You're invited to attend the **Art on a Journey Art Show** at the Ann Arbor District Library Downtown Branch. The Art on a Journey Art Show displays artwork created by homeless and formerly homeless

people. Exhibit runs from August 1 to September 14 in the lower level display case area. To meet the Artists attend the Opening Reception on August 4<sup>th</sup> between 5:30 and 7:15PM in the Downtown Lower Level Multipurpose Room. All artwork is for sale (cash only). Artists donate 10% of what they sell to Journey of Faith's homeless ministry. When homeless artists create and sell their art they gain much needed financial support while making sense of the world and finding meaning and purpose in it — it's a journey we're all on.





# Habitat for Humanity®

## Huron Valley Volunteer Day

On Saturday, May 20, a group of volunteers from Bethlehem (Larisa Jaskiewicz, Jamie Raab, Ellie Vasquez, Jennifer Vasquez, Edgar Vasquez, and Diane White)) worked with additional volunteers from Knox Presbyterian on a Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley build at 1093 Desoto Ave in Ypsilanti. Tasks that day included installing a window, pulling nails, and building a shed. Katie Rowan stopped by with a delicious and nourishing lunch, which was much appreciated fuel for the second half of the day! Over the past several weeks, we had been collecting money from the congregation to personally deliver to Habitat at our build date. Most of this money came from free will offerings at two mini bake sales that we hosted during coffee hour. We were able to hand a check to Habitat for \$959. Plus, according to Habitat, each volunteer saves them about \$25/hour. Thank you as always, Bethlehem members, for your generosity!



### Food Gatherers Volunteer Day

On June 10 Bethlehem volunteers worked at the Carrot Way warehouse and processed 914 pounds of food! Thank you to all who volunteered. Your help was sincerely appreciated.



### OUR FOOD BARREL IS HUNGRY

Our Food Gatherers barrel for nonperishables is located in the library. Please remember to gather extras each time you shop. Items most in need are soup, canned meat or vegetables, pasta, beans, rice, cereal, granola bars, peanut butter, jelly, baby food, formula, diapers, and toiletries.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NO GLASS CONTAINERS\*\*\***



### MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from all Ministry Team Meetings are due to Gwen by the 1st of every month at:

**parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org**

Thank you all for your service to our church community.



**BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
 423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104  
 Phone 734-665-6149 Fax 734-665-3399  
[www.bethlehem-ucc.org](http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org)  
[www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2](https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2)



# Office Hours

**Tuesday - Friday**  
**9:00 am - 2:00 pm**  
*(the office is closed on Mondays)*

## Staff E-Mail Addresses

The following is a list of our current staff at Bethlehem and their email addresses. Please utilize these email addresses for all communications.

**Rev. Dawn Christenson**      **Interim Pastor**  
 revdawnchristenson@gmail.com  
**Rev. Diane White**      **Associate Pastor**  
 pastordiane@bethlehem-ucc.org  
**Naki Kripfgans**      **Music Director / Organist**  
 musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org  
**Gwenda Mayes**      **Office Supervisor**  
 parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org  
**Jim Rowan**      **Hand Bell Director**  
 jrowan@umich.edu  
**Aimee Winchester**      **Administrative. Assistant**  
 churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org

## 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

Interim Pastor: Rev. Dawn Christenson  
 Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Diane White  
 Office Supervisor: Gwenda Mayes  
 Administrative Assistant: Aimee Winchester  
 Director of Music: Dr. Naki Kripfgans  
 Organist: Dr. Naki Kripfgans  
 Director of Handbells: Jim Rowan  
 Video Director: Dan Blakeney  
 Maintenance Personnel: Bill Husted

### MINISTRY TEAM CHAIRS

Finance: Tom Krell  
 Facilities: Steve Darr  
 Education: Eileen Koprowski  
 Worship: Open Position  
 Member Care: Judy Coucouvanis  
 Welcome: Jane Schmerberg  
 Outreach: Open Position  
 Fellowship: Open Position  
 Youth & Young Adult: Katie Rowan  
 Bethlehem Cemetery:  
 Mary Jean Raab  
 Nominations Committee:

### LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

President: Ron Dechert  
 Vice President: Jim Rowan  
 Secretary: Open Position  
 Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann  
 At-Large Members:  
     Dindy Haab  
     Pat Huibregtse  
     Barbara Schenk  
 Ex Officio: Open Position