

The Visitor

September 2023

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



See you in September . . . Do you remember that song made popular in 1966 by The Happenings? Part of the lyrics went something like, “See you in September; see you when the summer’s through . . . Will I see you in September or lose you to a summer love?” (Go ahead, try to get that tune out of your head. Ha!) Of course, the song was about two sweethearts going their separate ways at the end of a school-year, to enjoy their summer vacations. The lyrics are filled with longing and perhaps a bit of dread, in not knowing what the future holds.

I wonder – How are you feeling, as we head into September and the fall season? What are you longing for? Is there anything you’re dreading? I think it’s safe to say that each of us, at one time or another, has felt longing for better times and dreaded the future, when it seems to be filled with uncertainty. Yep, been there done that, countless times, and didn’t get a T-shirt. Yet, I survived. In most cases, the future didn’t turn out to be as horrible as I thought it would – usually things turned out for the best. What did the Psalmist write? - “I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 121:1-2) Truth be told – God has never failed me yet. And after 190 years of existence, it’s quite clear that God has never failed Bethlehem UCC either. Still, it might help you to know some rough interim plans moving forward.

I am counting on spending another few months, getting to know all of you. I long to hear your hopes and dreams for Bethlehem, as well as any concerns that you may have. To help facilitate this, I plan to schedule some small-group “house” meetings, at church as well as at people’s homes. Look for more information about these gatherings throughout September and October, perhaps even into November. By then, Advent and holidays will rapidly be upon us. So, after the first of the year, we’ll really be able to roll up our sleeves, with exercises and activities that focus your attention on key areas (“focus points”) of heritage, leadership, connections, mission and future. The goal of diving deeply into these focus points will be to help you discern, as a community of faith: Who are we? Who is our neighbor? Who is God calling us to become? On the surface, these may seem like simple questions. In reality, they’re not.

Ultimately, perhaps by next spring or summer, we’ll be ready to form and commission a Search Committee. The Search Committee will draft the church’s profile, based largely on all of the information generated by the congregation in the discernment process. Once the church’s profile is submitted to and approved by the Michigan Conference, it will be made available nation-wide to prospective clergy candidates. The Search Committee alone will have the big job of wading through numerous clergy profiles and conducting interviews, trying to narrow the field for those best suited to meet the needs and vision of Bethlehem UCC. They will make their best recommendation to the congregation, for final discernment by everyone.

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This process takes time – God’s good time led by the Spirit – to finally lead you to the very best pastor to call. You, the congregation, will all be given the opportunity on a Candidate Sunday to meet, hear preach and vote to accept or decline the candidate as your next settled pastor. Realistically, we’ll probably be into 2025 before you reach this stage of the transitional process. On average, the whole process from the time an intentional interim pastor begins serving, until a new settled pastor is called is 18 – 24 months.

Here is my promise to you: Over the course of our time together, I will be your guide, your coach, your teacher, your cheerleader and so much more. At times I will bring you joy and hope, and at other times I will make you squirm – all to get you through this wilderness experience and into the promised land. With the help of God, we’ll get there – TOGETHER, side by side and hand in hand. Thanks be to God. Amen

Grace & Peace, Pastor Dawn

“The Christian Church was born in song.”

- Ralph P. Martin

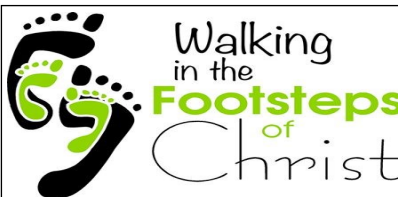


Hello Bethlehem singers! It will soon that exciting time of the year, the Bethlehem Chancel Choir will be resuming at the beginning of September!

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.



Opportunity to travel to the Holy Land!

Pastor Dawn has been contacted by Leviathan Tours (based in Ann Arbor), offering a

trip to Israel - Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus Christ - an 11-day journey through the Holy Land. You can find a complete itinerary for this trip on their website:

<https://www.leviathantours.com/walkin-in-jesus-footsteps>

The package they are offering covers flights, accommodation for 10 nights at top-tier 4/5 star hotels, daily breakfast and dinners, licensed tour guides, all entrance fees, convenient transportation, and airport shuttles. They write, "From the moment you book your trip until the day you return home, our team here and in Israel will take care of all aspects of your journey. The only expenses not included in the package are lunches (unless specified in the itinerary), personal travel insurance, and gratuities, which are entirely optional." Most of the trips that they book are for groups of 20 or more. But they will accommodate somewhat smaller groups.

The cost of the trip is based on the specific dates of travel, as prices for flights and hotels can vary during peak holiday periods and summer months. Once dates are finalized they will provide a final quote that includes everything mentioned above. The expected cost for a person in double occupancy is around \$4,300-4,600, including flights. For a person in single occupancy, there would be an additional charge of about \$1,150.

If you are interested in forming a travel group to go to the Holy Land, please let Pastor Dawn know by September 15th.



Current Fiscal Year

July, 2023	Year to Date	YTD Target	23 /24 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$56,709	\$65,228	\$391,370
Expenses	\$49,862	\$80,593	\$483,556
Net	\$6,847	(\$15,364)	(\$92,186)

Updates From Your Leadership Council

Dear Bethlehem Members and Friends,

It has been a very busy summer and it is hard to believe that school starts up again in a few weeks. There are many moving parts in play at Bethlehem. We (Council) thought this would be a good time to update our congregation on some of these moving parts. Please review the items below, they are listed in no particular order of importance.

Interim Senior Pastor

Everyone should know that we hired a new interim senior pastor as of July 1, 2023. It is our hope that you have met Pastor Dawn. Pastor Dawn continues to meet with our ministry teams, our Council, and as many members as possible. In the coming months, Pastor Dawn will work with Council to authorize a transition team to assist in numerous activities that prepares our congregation for a pastoral search. Convening a pastoral search committee will also be a key, critical activity. The anticipated timeline for the calling of our new senior pastor is 18-24 months. More information will be forthcoming in the months ahead.

Rally Day

The kick-off of our church year has always been Rally Day. Plans are currently being developed to have an after-service fellowship to celebrate the start of our new church year on Sunday September 10th. Please watch for additional information.

Bethlehem's 190th Anniversary

Sunday, August 27th, will mark the start of our church in 1833. Member care is sponsoring the coffee hour on that day and will be providing a cake to celebrate. Our Cemetery Board is also inviting members, friends and guests to visit our wonderful cemetery that afternoon. Several church members, ministry teams and Council have expressed an interest to host activities throughout the coming year to CELEBRATE this significant milestone. Council has scheduled an organizational start-up meeting following the Rally Day celebration on September 10th. Any church member or friend of Bethlehem is invited to attend this kick-off meeting. We anticipate it will start around 11:45 or 12:00 and should last 30-45 minutes. Please let me know if you are interested in helping with this activity but are unable to attend the meeting on 9/10/23.

Volunteers

We continue to have ongoing need for volunteers in all areas of our church structure. We need volunteers for several of our ministry teams, also ushers, liturgists, video support team, Bethlehem choir, and handbells to name a few. Please contact the church office or myself if you are interested in becoming a volunteer in support of our church.

UM Football Parking

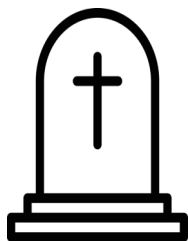
We are rapidly moving to the start of UM Football. We will again have football parking for each home game during the upcoming season. If you would like to help with football parking (1 game or more) please contact Jennifer Vasquez or use the Sign-Up Genius link (in the refrigerator page). Many of those who park at Bethlehem are long-term patrons. It is always fun to meet and talk to all who park at Bethlehem. Last year we raised over \$5000 for our church from this activity.

Parsonage (Hewett St)

With the departure of Pastor John, the parsonage will not be needed until we have an opportunity to hire a new senior pastor. The congregation voted to rent the parsonage if city approval is obtained. The initial city inspection identified several items that needs to be fix before the house could be rented. Thanks to the hard work of our wonderful facilities team, all of those issues have been addressed. We have scheduled a final inspection on Wednesday 8/23. We anticipate approval from the city at that time. We are blessed that we have a young couple who will be renting the parsonage house for one year beginning in November pending final inspection.

I am sure there are other activities that are currently being planned. We will continue to distribute information as it becomes available. Thank you all for your ongoing support and engagement in our church life. God bless you all.

Ron Dechert-President



Greetings Members and Friends: We wrote about our responsibility to maintain and care for the cemetery in excellent stead, in a previous Visitor article. In August we hosted an open house, celebrating our heritage. This month we will focus on how we financially operate the 50 acre cemetery, year over year. 190 years and counting.

The cemetery is self funded and has been for many, many years. Every sale allows for a small portion to go into the perpetual care fund. Those funds are invested by Bank of Ann Arbor as a third party. The growth of the fund, earned income and investment appreciation, is transferred to current funds annually, but the growing corpus, is never touched.

The cemetery association fund has been built to handle on-going expenses and money for a “rainy day”. Due to the six member, all volunteer board, who put in 10 to 50 hours of work free of charge, a month, and four great staff persons, the cemetery is well cared for and stands ready for the future.

None of the annual budget of Bethlehem Church is provided to the cemetery. (The cost of general liability insurance for all Bethlehem properties is included the church budget, at no expense to the cemetery.) The cemetery pays for all of its own staff, at no cost to the church.

Every few years major work is done to the roads at the cemetery. 2017 was the last time, before this year. In these years the road work runs about \$50,000. In 2017 an anonymous gift of \$20,000 greatly helped with this necessary expenditure. This year, right now, we are seeking donations for roads and another large expense, tree removal, and trimming. (When trees are storm damaged, there is no coverage in the insurance policy to cover this work.) With the winter ice storm and several high wind storms, unfortunately, at least a half dozen huge trees are severely damaged and need removal in the coming weeks.

Please consider a gift to the cemetery for these works. Checks can be made out directly to Bethlehem Cemetery, or Bethlehem Church and Cemetery in the memo line.

We are going to create a broader appeal in the next month or so, to the entire greater Ann Arbor Community. The majority of people seeking our interment services are not Bethlehem Church members, but members of our Community.

Please ask us any questions. Email us at bucc.cemetery@bethlehem-ucc.org, or call and leave a message at 734-665-6149 ext 219.

Members of the Cemetery Board and advisors are:

Mary Friend
Shannon O'Reilly
Jamie Dylenski
Jim Lutz
Susan Irwin
Marilyn Pearson, advisor
Mary Jean Raab



**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.

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received July 15 - August 15

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Hugh Keppler Memorial
Pastor Orval Willimann Memorial

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT

Ron Gentner Memorial

RADIO SPONSORSHIP

Aug. 6 - In memory of Frederick , Lela and Hugh Keppler

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



In-Kind Contributions

The following school supplies are needed for all ages:



Backpacks
(significant need)
Solar-Powered

Scientific Calculators

Pens

Colored Pencils

Washable Markers

Crayons

Highlighters



WELCOME BACK!
SUNDAY SCHOOL RALLY DAY
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH
10: 00AM SERVICE

SPECIAL COFFEE HOUR & TREATS!
A MULTI-AGE LEVEL

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS
ALL AGE CHILDREN ARE WELCOME
SIBLINGS WILL BE TOGETHER COME
MEET YOUR TEACHERS

PLEASE BRING DONATIONS FOR OUR
BACK-TO-SCHOOL DRIVE
TO BENEFIT ALPHA HOUSE AND
PEACE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

WE LOOK FORWARD
TO SEEING
EVERYONE THERE!!!



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 4th 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.

WARNING
DUE DATES ARE CLOSER
THAN THEY APPEAR

Please make sure that the office receives all Refrigerator Page and Email Blast submissions by 12:00 pm Wednesday each week. September 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

BUCC HAPPENINGS



September 1

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

September 2

- U of M Football Home Game vs East Carolina—
Parking at BUCC, 12:00 pm

September 3, Communion Sunday

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

September 6

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

September 9

- U of M Football vs UNLV, Parking at BUCC, 3:30 pm

September 10

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

September 12

- Bethlehem Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 9:30 am

September 13

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:00 am
- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

September 16

- U of M Football vs Bowling Green, Parking at BUCC, 7:30 pm

September 17

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

September 19

- Facilities Ministry Team, Lounge, 3:30 pm

September 20

- Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

September 23

- U of M Football vs Nebraska, Parking at BUCC, 12:00 pm

September 24

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

September 27

Busy Christian Hands, Schmale Lounge, 12:00 noon

Member Care Ministry Mtg., Lounge, 4:00 pm

Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

September 28

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



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.



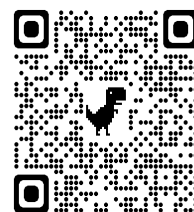
It's almost FOOTBALL SEASON

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*





49th Annual Ann Arbor Area CROP Hunger Walk

Sunday, October 15, 2023

Every fall since 1975, Washtenaw / Ann Arbor congregations and organizations have walked together with a common mission: to help the hungry and impoverished here and throughout the world with leadership from Church World Service [CWS].

The 2022 Walk raised a total of \$35,284.35 which beat our goal of \$35,000. This year we hope for at least 25 participating congregations and organizations, with a goal of \$40,000.



Zion Lutheran Church (1501 West Liberty, Ann Arbor) has kindly agreed again to host the **2023 Ann Arbor Area CROP Hunger Walk**. Registration starts at 1 PM with group outdoor send-off at 2 pm, or you can walk virtually in your own neighborhood.

Food provided outside at Zion Lutheran Church by fedupministries.org!

Mark your calendars: Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023

Visit our website:

www.crophungerwalk.org/AnnArborMI
www.facebook.com/annarborecrophungerwalk

Many small gifts make a BIG difference!

2023 CROP TEAM CO-CHAIRS

Mary Pratt

Bryan Weinert

Zion Lutheran Church

Hosts:

Pastor Anna Taylor-McCants+

Bryan Weinert

Treasurer:

Patti Yonka

Route Co-Chairs:

Jen Chapin-Smith

Alex Nemmers

Members:

Barb Fichtenberg

Sue Muir

Donald MacGregor

Rodger Wolff

Charles Yonka

CWS Co-Ordinator:

Andrew Gifford

Benefiting: 75% goes to CWS national/international communities.

25% of funds will go to: Saline Area Social Service, Breakfast Program @ St. Andrew's, Peace Neighborhood Center, Aid in Milan, Hope Clinic, Love Thy Neighbor FUMCAA, Community Action Network, FedUp Ministries, Growing Hope, Packard Health, SOS Community Services

CONTACT:

m.pratt33@yahoo.com

734-975-5310

SAVE THESE DATES:

Drive-thru Recruiter Fair at Zion Lutheran on **Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023 from 5 to 7 PM**

Virtual Recruiter Training, **Sept. 7, 2023 @ 7PM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82230365880>

Meeting ID: 822 3036 5880

Virtual Local Agency Roundtable, **Sept. 11, 2023 @ 12 Noon** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86363315162>

Meeting ID: 863 6331 5162



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
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
 Admin. Assistant: Aimee Winchester
 Director of Music/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
 Jenny Foster
 Welcome: Jane Schmerberg
 Outreach: Open Position
 Fellowship: Open Position
 Youth & Young Adult: Katie Rowan
 Bethlehem Cemetery: Mary Jean Raab
 Nominations Committee: Open Position

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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