

# The Visitor

November 2023  
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



*"BUCC November Newsletter – From Pastor Dawn*

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)*

Beloved ones, as I write this, I realize that we have been together a little over 3 months. I am slowly getting acquainted with many of you. And I must say that you are rapidly finding a very special place in my heart.

Over the past few months, I am frequently asked: "Are we going to make it?" "Can we survive?" To such questions I must respond with a resounding "YES!" Frankly, I would not have come here if I didn't believe that to be true. Have I seen the financials? Yes. Have I seen the attendance figures, compared to years-gone-by? Yes. AND I've seen a deep, rich 190-year history, and a core of current, faithful, committed disciples. I believe. My quest is to help you believe in yourselves, as I believe in you.

All that said, I have been struggling to understand what appeared to me to be a lack of engagement and apathy. Such behaviors don't just happen out of the blue, for individuals or a community. So, I put on my 'diagnostic hat', seeking causes for such effects. The Lombard report pointed to some answers – key traumatic events and challenges over the past 25 years. The Lombard team did an excellent job of capturing these, not the least of which included the retirement (and now death) of the beloved Rev. Orval Willimann and the sudden death of Rev. Greg Smith. Conflicts with subsequent pastors and within the congregation have added layer upon layer of more grief and pain. Grief accompanies every loss – not just those involving the death of someone we love. We also grieve the loss of relationships, good health, ability, independence, and so much more. The grief of each loss is like a giant snowball rolling downhill, increasing to an enormous size by the time it reaches the valley below. You are in that valley. And in conversation with many of you, I have come to understand how heavy the cumulative weight of the grief and pain weigh on you. Honestly, my heart aches for you.

So, what do we do from here? We lean on God's everlasting arms and begin the healing process. It is the only way to dig out from under the weight of that giant, painful, chilling snowball. This is necessary, before we begin our journey back to the peaceful mountaintop, where the air is crisp and clear, the sunshine warm, and the view exquisite. With the help of God, we will make it to the summit. I have every confidence that we will! Dear ones, this is not the first time Bethlehem UCC has found itself in a snow-filled valley. Over the past 190 years, Bethlehem has dug itself out, mended what was broken by countless snowballs, and rose again to the mountaintop. Let's follow the historic precedent and mend your broken hearts first, before pressing upward.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Pastor Diane and I are committed to walking with you through the valley of your grief and helping you heal. We are here for you, as individuals and as a community of faith. As we consider your grief and pain, we know that the upcoming holidays may be difficult. Each of you will respond in different ways, to the festivities of the holiday season. The holiday season is a time that may be joyous for some and agonizing for others.

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So, we'll need to be a little gentler, kinder and understanding with one another. And to offer an opportunity to express your grief, we will be holding a Blue Christmas service this year. Traditionally, Blue Christmas services provide comfort for those who have recently lost loved ones. This year, we hope that this service will provide comfort for everyone whose grief is very real, regardless of the nature of the loss. Our Blue Christmas service will be held on Thursday, December 21st – the longest night of the year. We encourage you to join us for a sacred night of comfort, companionship, community, and candlelight. We will get more details to you, as the time draws near.

Beloved ones, together we will get through this. Bethlehem United Church of Christ WILL recover and flourish once again. Until then, may God hold your hearts gently. And may *the super-glue of God's love mend your broken hearts.*

*Blessings of Comfort and Hope,*

Pastor Dawn

**Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."**

Dear Ones,

These are two scriptures have helped me during the past three months. Reminding me of God's compassion in times of trial and helping me identify God's presence in the many prayers I have felt, cards I have received, and expressions of sympathy and love shared by so many of you. I have a stack of cards about 4" tall that I read again and again to feel the caring support of others.

I am so grateful to Bethlehem for the time to be with my mother when she was still with us and then as she was dying. That time was precious to me – time I will cherish the rest of my life. I felt God in the mix since Pastor Dawn began her ministry with us at the exact time my mother went into crisis allowing me to be away while you, the church, was still being cared for.


Have you noticed how God always has a plan for us even when we are so troubled, we're not sure which way is up? Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Sometimes we think we have to do everything all by ourselves; however, it is important for us to also remember to let go and let God help. God's help is all around us – in the folks who love us, the ones who care, the ones who have also suffered, the ones who see our pain and are there to listen. God is with me and with you,

Always,

Pastor Diane



**WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM**



For 190 years, women of Bethlehem have had an integral part in many aspects of our congregational life. But in particular, the benevolent work of the women has been recorded in many forms of service since the organization of the Frauenverein in 1871. Those services included mission projects, relief calls, assistance to local service agencies, scholarships, and acts of love to shut-ins and the aged.

In 1917, the Bethlehem Auxiliary was formed. Since that time, several women's circles have come and gone. But the Auxiliary Circle still remains, and it currently is combined with the Mother's Study Circle, which was formed in the early 1950s. These two circles, in particular, have been very involved in benevolent work for Church World Service, which includes Blanket Sunday, Health Kits, Baby Kits, and School Kits. Auxiliary/Mothers Study, with about 10 members remaining, were meeting regularly until Covid.

Recently, the Auxiliary Circle/Mother's Study donated \$250 for CWS Period Packs that were assembled at this year's CROP Walk on October 15. The Ann Arbor CROP Walk Committee is very grateful for their support of this project for women in need. Thank you for your legacy of support for Church World Service!

**SAVE THE DATE**

*Hanging of the Greens*  
*Saturday, November 18th @ 9:00 am*



**Your help is needed to decorate the church.**

**Plan on joining us to get ready for the  
 Christmas Season!**

**For more information, please contact Jan Eadie  
 (jee21152@gmail.com)**



**Totenfest Memorial Service**

**Sunday, November 5**

**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 2022.

Please contact the church office by November 1 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.



**Advent Workshop &  
 Potluck**

**Sunday, November 26th at  
 11:15 in the Fellowship  
 Dining Room.**

**Lots of fun crafts will be available for all ages to  
 create.**

**Bring your favorite main dish, salad, side, or  
 dessert to share at the potluck.**

**Please sign up on the bulletin board outside the  
 office what dish you'd like to bring.**

**MITTEN TREE IS COMING!**

The Mitten Tree will be ready to decorate with mittens, scarves, hats, gloves and socks starting Friday November 18th through Sunday, December 17th so we have time to distribute everything in time for Christmas

All items will be given to local organizations for those in need..



**Current Fiscal Year**

September, 2023	MTD	YTD Target	23 /24 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$30,288	\$130,457	\$391,370
Expenses	\$28,360	\$161,185	\$483,556
Net	\$1,928	(\$30,729)	(\$92,186)

**In honor of Veteran's Day, November 11, 2023, we would like to acknowledge those Bethlehem members that are still among us, that gave/are giving their time serving our country.**



<b>Mike Ehnis</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1963 – 1971</b>
<b>Dave Gilmore</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1970 – 1972</b>
		<b>Ret. 1989 – 2005</b>
<b>Dennis Huibregtse</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1971 – 1976</b>
<b>Ron Karr</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1968 – 1970</b>
<b>Scott Lovelace</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1970 – 1976</b>
<b>Paul Neeb</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1954 – 1956</b>
<b>Jerry Sutfin</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1957 – 1962</b>
<b>Carl Waltjen</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1956 – 1959</b>
		<b>1961 – 1964</b>
<b>Norm Wetzel</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1968 – 1970</b>
<b>Jesse Wilcox</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>2008 – 2015</b>
<b>Tom Ziesemer</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>1966 – 1969</b>
<b>Jim Aldrich</b>	<b>US Air Force</b>	<b>1963 – 1969</b>
<b>Mike Haab</b>	<b>US Air Force</b>	<b>1965 – 1969</b>
<b>Larry Katz</b>	<b>US Air Force</b>	<b>1957 – 1960</b>
<b>Gary Dresselhouse</b>	<b>US Marines</b>	<b>1954 – 1956</b>
<b>Jacob Pieske</b>	<b>US Marines</b>	<b>2011–2021</b>
<b>Eugene Alber</b>	<b>US Navy</b>	<b>1949 – 1953</b>
<b>Bob Loukotka</b>	<b>US Navy</b>	<b>1961 – 1966</b>
		<b>Ret. 1988</b>
<b>Jim Stadel</b>	<b>US Navy</b>	<b>1969 – 1973</b>
<b>Ron White</b>	<b>US Navy</b>	<b>1969-1970</b>
<b>Jennifer Steinaway</b>	<b>Army National Guard</b>	<b>Active Duty</b>

# BUCC HAPPENINGS

mark  your **Calendar**

## November 1

- Getting to know you, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Busy Christian Hands, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

## November 2

- Getting to know you, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 2:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 5:30 pm

## November 3

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

## November 4

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

## November 5 - Communion Sunday / Totenfest

- Sunday School, during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

## November 6

- Hand Bell Rehearsal, Choir Rm, 6:00 pm

## November 8

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:30 am
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Busy Christian Hands, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 2:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 5:30 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

## November 9

- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 2:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 5:30 pm

## November 12

- Sunday School, during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

## November 13

- Hand Bell Rehearsal, Choir Rm, 6:00 pm

## November 14

- Bethlehem Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

## November 15

- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Busy Christian Hands, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 2:00 pm
- Member Care Ministry Mtg., Lounge 3:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 5:30 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Rm., 7:00 pm

## November 16

- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 10:00 am
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 2:00 pm
- Getting to Know You, Lounge, 5:30 pm

## November 18

- Hanging of the Greens, Church 9:00 am

## November 19

- Sunday School, during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

## November 20

- Hand Bell Rehearsal, Choir Rm 6:00 pm

## November 21

- Facilities Ministry Team Mtg., Lounge 3:30 pm

## November 22

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

## November 23

- Worship at Brecon Village, 10:00 am

## November 25

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

## November 26

- Sunday School, during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am
- Advent Workshop and All Church Potluck, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

## November 27

- Hand Bell Rehearsal, Choir Rm., 6:00 pm

## November 29

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



Volunteer!



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.



Please make sure that the office receives all [Refrigerator Page](#) and [Email Blast](#) submissions by 12:00 pm Wednesday each week. December 15 is the deadline for items to be included in the January edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to: [churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org)



MEETING  
MINUTES

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

month at:

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

Thank you all for your service to our church community.

## Crop Walk 2023

**Sunday, October 15**

Our walkers received a certificate acknowledging that BUCC was 3rd in raising funds for CROP last year. In worship on Sunday October 15, Andrew Gifford of Church World Service recognized BUCC as a legacy congregation for our years of support.

**Thanks to our Team Walkers!**



**Pastor Dawn Christenson; Jim Judson;  
Jill, Carrie, & Steve Schwartz.  
Not pictured Ele Kotowski and family.**



**Bethlehem Cemetery News**  
Sunday November 5, 2023 we celebrate Totenfest at Bethlehem Church. Many other faiths and religions celebrate too around that same date. All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day and other celebrations are ultimately a celebration of Christ's victory over death, and a time to remember the dead. Please come to Bethlehem Cemetery, as you are able, to remember the faithful departed during this time in early November.

Bethlehem Cemetery Ann Arbor is located at  
2801 Jackson Rd. 48103.

**Bethlehem Cemetery Board**

## Back to School Drive UPDATE

Thanks to your generosity, the Back to School Drive was a success! The Education Team delivered 25 backpacks and 4 laundry baskets full of school supplies to Peace Neighborhood Center and Alpha House. Many thanks for your donations!



## Memorials and Gifts

**Gifts Received September 16 - October 15**

### CURRENT FUND

Pastor Dawn Honorarium

### GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Charles & Marian Cope Memorial  
Roger Hoxie Memorial

### LIVE STREAM FUND

Roger Hoxie Memorial  
Jennifer O'Reilly Memorial

### RADIO SPONSORSHIP

Oct. 1 - In honor of Roger Hoxie and his family  
Oct. 15 - In memory of Frederick and Lela Keppler



**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.

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

<u>STAFF</u>	<u>MINISTRY TEAM CHAIRS</u>	<u>LEADERSHIP COUNCIL</u>
Interim Pastor: Rev. Dawn Christenson	Finance: Tom Krell	President: Ron Dechert
Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Diane White	Facilities: Steve Darr	Vice President: Jim Rowan
Office Supervisor: Gwenda Mayes	Education: Eileen Koprowski	Secretary: Barbara Schenk
Admin. Assistant: Aimee Winchester	Worship: Open Position	Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann
Director of Music/Organist: Dr. Naki Kripfgans	Member Care: Judy Coucouvanis Jenny Foster	At-Large Members:
Director of Handbells: Jim Rowan	Welcome: Jane Schmerberg	Dindy Haab
Video Director: Dan Blakeney	Outreach: Open Position	Pat Huijbregtse
Maintenance Personnel: Bill Husted	Fellowship: Open Position	Ex Officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson
	Youth & Young Adult: Katie Rowan	
	Bethlehem Cemetery: Mary Jean Raab	
	Nominations Committee: Open Position	