

# The Visitor

June 2024

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Jesus said, in his prayer, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, so that they may all be one, as we are one.”

(John 17:22)

What a beautiful thought: “so that they may all be one, as we are one.” One God:

Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, then, now,

and forevermore. But that is God and this is us, right? We are mere humans, powerless to control our lives (even though we try to and think that we can; and God laughs). The world we live in is so divided and embattled. So, is it truly possible for us to BE one, and of one accord? Yes, because we are empowered by the Spirit of God, and that Spirit is love itself.

Remember, Jesus commanded us to “love one another as I have loved you.” The Apostle Paul wrote about what that kind of love looks like, in 1 Corinthians 13. I preached on that recently at the funeral of a dear friend. While unusual for a funeral, his wife chose that reading, because Bill embodied it with his life. Paul’s description of love is this, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. ...faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

The embodiment of that kind of love, God’s love, causes us to speak and act with humility, kindness, generosity, compassion and mercy. My friend, Bill, peace be upon him, enacted God’s love with absolutely everyone, from family and friends to complete strangers. He welcomed and embraced everyone, no matter how different they may be from him. Skin color, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, educational background, ability or disability, ethnicity, you name it – it made no difference to him. If you needed help or support, Bill would be there. And if you needed someone in your corner, Bill would be your fiercest advocate. If each of us would simply try inexhaustibly to embody love, as Jesus taught us, as Paul described, and as my friend Bill lived, we can have a profound, positive impact in the lives of others. Truly, we can change the world. AND we can help pave the way to becoming one, as God is one. What a beautiful vision – ONE human race living peacefully together in a world where everyone has enough and can be who God created them to be. Let’s do our part to make it so. With the help of God, may it be our legacy.

Blessings of Peace,

Pastor Dawn

Click [Here](#) for the UCC Pride Month Greeting from Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson

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**Dear Friends in Christ,**



Rita Schiano wrote,

***“Talking about our problems is our greatest addiction. Break the habit. Talk about your joys.”***

Am I in this habit of focusing on the negative? Are you? Do we look for what is wrong in our life rather than rejoice in what is good, what can be and all God has provided? If this is my habit, how do I turn it around? How do I seek a different purpose in my life? I received a devotion from a friend written by Richard Exley, a pastor in Shreveport, LA. It is call the “One-Minute Devotion” and I thought it might help. Here is what Pastor Exley wrote:

As I look back over my life, I realize that I have missed a number of opportunities - opportunities to be forgiving, to speak a word of apology, to lend a helping hand, or to offer the gift of friendship.

Some opportunities are gone forever. Others linger still, giving me another chance. With God’s help I will not let a single expression of love go unspoken; I won’t leave a single act of kindness undone, a single friendship unpursued. I dare not for life is too fleeting and I may never get another chance. You may not either, so seize the moment!

***Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act***  
(Proverbs 3:27).

**Lord Jesus, help us to seize the moment and live life to the fullest.**

**In Your holy name we pray. Amen.**

(Exley, Richard. One-Minute Devotion: one thought, one scripture one prayer. April 2013)

Carpe Diem – seize the day.

We recently heard the words of Jesus as given to us in, John 13:34,

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

**LOVE**, a four-letter word that can mend relationship, tear down walls, build friendships and overcome hate.

Love can cause us to **THINK**

before we speak: **T** – Is it true? **H** – Is it helpful? **I** – Is it inspiring? **N** – Is it necessary? **K** – Is it kind?

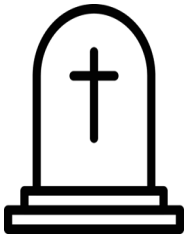
Love can help us focus on and talk about all of God’s gifts including the relationships that support us on the journey.

**Christ’s peace be with you,**

Pastor Diane



## Bethlehem Cemetery Association Board Annual Report



May 1, 2024

**Dear members and friends,**

It might be helpful to review the cemetery board's report from last year's annual report before you read this year's report, as it details upcoming changes we have been making this past year.

In short, this past fiscal year has been one of many changes in our operations as volunteers. The number of hours spent weekly would be difficult to calculate, but for the six board members, it is likely close to one full-time employee equivalent. At the same time the work has been plentiful, it has been done with enthusiasm and positive momentum, in the pursuit of our call to mission and servant leadership.

Some of our major initiatives:

- Our roads were improved and resurfaced
- Many large trees were removed due to ice and wind damage
- The safety high pole area lights were replaced with LED lights and one new pole added
- A new website is developed and will likely be launched by the time you read here. On that website are many new features, where customers can find and use features previously only available in a manual format

We learned that our long-time and much-appreciated accountant and bookkeeper, Betty Clark was retiring mid-fiscal year. A needs assessment, plan, and search were conducted, leading to the hiring of Shannon O'Reilly as the present and transitional bookkeeper and accountant.

The double checking of all hard copy records, at least 8,000 records, have now been or soon to be inspected by a team of three persons

The overall reorganization of administrative duties from a central church office to a diffused approach of communication and information sharing was undertaken and is operating well on a day-to-day basis

A celebration of Bethlehem's first church and the beginning of the cemetery in 1833 was enjoyed in an open house at the cemetery on Sunday, August 26, 2023

By Memorial Day 2024 once again we assisted the American Legion Post 46 in setting out over 500 US flags. Bethlehem military Veterans and friends helped.

As we look to the future, we recognize the strong trend from burial to cremation, 75% of interments currently are cremations, and then as more environmental evidence is presented, new initiatives in green burials will be investigated.

To you our church members and friends, we promise to keep the communication flowing, always looking for your insight and feedback. And, we thank you for your financial support of your cemetery. We do not have a line item in the church budget. We are supported by cemetery lot sales, services performed, interest from cemetery perpetual care and cemetery association invested monies, and generous gifts/donations from you and the community.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Jamie Dylenski, member; Mary Friend, vice president; Susan Irwin, member; Jim Lutz, treasurer ; Shannon O'Reilly, secretary; Mary Jean Raab, president; and Marilyn Pearson, advisor



# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



**Dear Bethlehem Members,**

As we approach the end of our church year and our annual meeting (June 9<sup>th</sup>), we are in need of 11 volunteers to serve in various positions of elected officers for the coming church year. Our church functions on the engagement of our volunteers. The need is real if we wish to continue the community and congregational support. Council is asking you to consider volunteering for any of the open positions. The requirements are simple: 1) active member in good standing with at least 2) 1 year since joining as a member in this congregation.

Listed below are the teams and open positions you might consider. If you are uncertain what the duties are for each team, please review the church by-laws and / or contact any member of Leadership Council.

Team	Open Positions	Title	Term Length
Council	3	Vice-President	1 year
		At-large	3 year
		At-large	3 year
Worship	1	Chair	3 year
Facilities	1	At-large	3 year
Welcome	1	Chair	3 year
Fellowship	1	Chair	3 year
Youth / Young Adult	1	Chair	3 year
Nominations	1	Chair	3 year

Thank you for prayerfully considering this request for support.

**God Bless You All**

*Ron Dechert-President*



June 1

- Patsy Hentz Memorial Service, Sanctuary/  
Fellowship Hall, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

June 2 Communion Sunday

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

June 5

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Care Mtg., Lounge, 3:00 pm

June 7

- Bethlehem Veteran's and Friends Monthly  
Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 8:30 am

June 9

- Sunday School during Worship
- Graduate Recognition during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am
- Annual Congregational Mtg., Sanctuary, 11:30 am

June 11

- Bethlehem Women and Friends Monthly Breakfast,  
Alpha Koney, 9:30 am

June 12

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 16

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

June 18

- Facilities Team Mtg., lounge, 3:30 pm

June 19

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 23

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

June 26

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 27

- Leadership Council, Lounge, 6:00 pm

June 30

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

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.

**BUCC Military Veterans and Friends** assisted the **American Legion Post 46** in placing close to **600 flags** on veterans gravesites at Bethlehem cemetery before Memorial Day.

I would like to thank **Mike Haab, Jim Judson, Joe /Jan Eadie, Norm Wetzel, John Schmale and Tom MacDonald** for sharing their time in recognizing those who served our country.

We also thank **Gary Dresselhouse and Mike Haab** for helping in purchasing a new American flag, and to **John Irwin** for raising the new flag that proudly flies over the entrance to Bethlehem Cemetery.

I am grateful to be part of this wonderful group of volunteers.

Thank You,

Tom Ziesemer



## IMPORTANT MESSAGE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

# SAVE THE DATE!

Dear Bethlehem,

The annual congregational meeting will be held on **Sunday June 9, 2024**. The meeting will start immediately following our Sunday service. The planned agenda items will be sent out in advance of the meeting. As in years past, **we need 25 members in attendance to have a quorum**. Please add this date to your schedule. I hope to see you all at the meeting.

**God Bless You All, Ron Dechert**




# House of Faith



**GROUP:** BETHLEHEM UCC  
**WHEN:** May 11, 2024 / May 18, 2024  
**TIME:** 9 AM - 3 PM  
**LOCATION:** 636 Lynne Ave. Ypsilanti, MI 48198. 900 sq. ft. • 3 bed • 1 bath

**DAILY CREW SIZE:**  
 4-5 volunteers needed per day  
 Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley engages our neighbors to build better neighborhoods through our volunteer, donation, partnership and ReStore efforts. We build homes, communities and hope... **under one roof.**

## WHAT TO KNOW & HOW TO PREPARE

- No construction experience necessary! Our House Leaders will ensure a variety of tasks are available for all individuals with a wide variety of skill levels and physical abilities.
- Wear comfortable clothes that can get dirty and dress for the weather. We do not guarantee heat/air condition at any of our work sites
- Wear closed-toed shoes or work boots (no open-toed shoes)
- Remove jewelry and pull back loose hair
- We have disposable water bottles on site, but do not offer food. Plan to go out or bring lunch (we'll break for an hour at noon, but do not provide food)
  - Port-a-jons will be available
  - Tools & equipment will be provided. You are welcome to bring your own, but you are responsible for them, and they are subject to our House Leader's safety check
- **Safety is our highest priority! Keeping a safe worksite is everyone's responsibility.** All PPE will be provided, but you can bring your own (eye protection, work gloves, mask, etc)
- **Projects:** Expected tasks will be emailed to you the week of your build day. Please dress accordingly
- **Age Restrictions:** Due to safety regulations, individuals under the age of 16 are not permitted on our active sites. Those ages 16 - 17 must have a waiver completed by a parent/guardian and be accompanied by an adult while on site

## SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

All volunteers must register online by the Monday before each scheduled build day.

**Expected tasks, additional details and possible location changes will be emailed the week of each scheduled build day.**

All **MUST** arrive by 9 AM and plan to stay on site until the projects have been completed.

**SIGN UP HERE:**  
<https://givepul.se/7td3il>  
 Access code: **Faith**

Questions?  
 Contact:  
 Jessica DeVol at  
 jdevol@h4h.org  
 or 734.882.2012  
 www.h4h.org  
 @H4HHuronValley



www.h4h.org

950 Victors Way, Ste. 50  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48108

734-677-1558



UNDER ONE ROOF

# BUCC HAPPENINGS

Thank You Bethlehem Veterans and Friends  
Breakfast Group!

### Bethlehem Cemetery has a new flag.

It is proudly flying on the pole in the Veterans  
garden near the cemetery entrance.

Thanks guys for your donation.

**From your Cemetery Board**



**Thank you Member  
Care Team for  
making Mother's Day  
so special for all!  
May 12, 2024**



**SUMMER IS FINALLY HERE! It  
really is.  
Are you ready??**

Now that summer is finally here,  
please stop in to check out the books  
in the church Library. During the summer months of  
June, July and August books are on sale 4 for \$1. So  
plan now to shop early and get your books lined up for  
your summer reading. The cashbox for purchases is on  
the wall as you walk in on your right.

We have added some new books and removed some  
of the old ones. The adult novels are alphabetized by  
author and are neatly arranged on the shelves for your  
browsing pleasure. On the far right wall there is also  
an area for children's books. Above the children's  
picture books are books for independent readers.

If you have books you would like to donate, there is a  
bin just inside the door where they can be  
placed. Please, *please* keep in mind we do not accept  
non-fiction or how-to books, textbooks, or  
cookbooks. *Novels only.* And we are now offering  
large-print and books on disc. We have a few located  
on the top of the shelves in the back of the library on  
the left side of the room.

**THANKS for your support.**

### Celebrating Graduates

Join us in our Graduate  
Recognition Ceremony. it will be on  
Sunday, June 9, 2024 during the  
10:00 am worship service.



**Bethlehem Women & Friends  
Monthly Breakfast  
Tuesdays at 9:30 am**

**June 11, July 9, August 13**

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.  
Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or  
siiwin46@gmail.com for more info.



**Bethlehem Veterans & Friends  
Monthly Breakfast**

June 7, 2024 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or via email at:

ziesemerth@gmail.com

# Congratulations, Graduates!



Abigail Korzuck  
Eastern Michigan University  
Bachelors in Secondary  
Education with a focus in Social  
Studies/History  
Plans to stay in the area and  
teach Middle School Social  
Studies

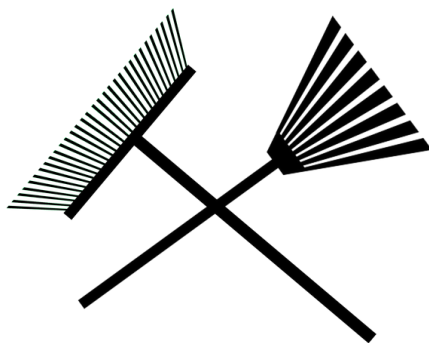


JuxtaPrax Davi Sprague  
Michigan Technological  
University  
Associate of Engineering  
Associate of Humanities  
Juxta plans to continue living in  
the Keweenaw with their  
spouse Lauren while pursuing  
freelance media production  
opportunities.





Thank You Volunteers



SPRING CLEAN UP 2024

**Memorials and Gifts**

**Gifts Received April 16, 2024 – May 15, 2024**

**BETHLEHEM CEMETERY FUND**

**BROADCAST FUND**

Nancy Gentner Memorial

Patsy Hentz Memorial

**CURRENT FUND**

**GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND**

Patsy Hentz Memorial

**OUTREACH FUND**

Patsy Hentz Memorial

Groundcover News Honorarium

**PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND**

**VIDEO STREAMING FUND**

Gifts listed were received through  
May 15, 2024



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

**June 15** is the deadline for items to be included in the July/August edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to: **churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org**



**Calling all Liturgists!**

It's easy being a liturgist, everything is already written; all you have to do is read aloud. Sign up on SignUpGenius using this link [LITURGIST SIGNUP](#), or contact Pastors Dawn or Diane, or call the office at 665-6149

**Would You Like To Use The New Phone App?**

You have two options with this new phone-based system. **Option 1:** Call 1-855-669-8965 and listen to the service live or listen to the latest recording any time during the week. **Option 2: The new system will call you just before the service begins.** All we need from you is your name and the phone number the system should call. All you need to do is answer your phone about 5 min before the service begins. The audio portion of the service will run the entire length of the service (it is not limited to 60 min).

This will also allow us to bring the audio of non-Sunday worship services to you such as the Longest Night Service, Christmas Eve service, Good Friday services, etc. With this phone service, you will be able to hear the worship service wherever you are. **Please call the office (734-665-6149) to provide your name and the phone number we should use for Option 2.** We encourage you to share this message with anyone you know who relies on the radio broadcast to follow our worship services. Thank you!



**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.

**Current Fiscal Year**

March 2024	Year to Date	YTD Target	23 /24 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$322, 140	\$358, 756	\$391,370
Expenses	\$388, 602	\$443, 260	\$483,556
Net	(\$66,462)	(\$84, 504)	(\$92,186)



**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>Business Manager</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: Open Position	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	