

The Visitor

July/August 2024
Bethlehem United Church of Christ

*From the
Pastor*



Better is a handful with quiet than two handfuls with toil, and a chasing after the wind. [Eccl. 4:6]

"Summertime and the livin' is easy. Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high. O, your daddy's rich and your ma is good lookin'. So hush, little baby, don't you cry." Remember that Gershwin song, from the musical Porgy & Bess? The song for me has an easy-feel to it, both musically and rhythmically. When I hear it or sing it, the cares of the world seem to drift away, as if carried off by a warm summer breeze. It's soothing for me, body and soul, and I find myself slipping into a blessed, restorative restfulness. I find the same sense of comfortable, soothing, restorative restfulness, when I rest in God.

It's easy to get carried away by life and all of its demands and challenges. But we need to take time away from all of that. We need a break, lest we truly break. We need to pause from the hustle and bustle of life, and enter into respite time with God. You know, for years, I would get up early, just to sit with God while sipping a cup of coffee. I would sit quietly in God's presence, sometimes chatting, sometimes lifting prayers in earnest, but mostly quietly breathing in God's Spirit of peace and breathing out all of my cares. It was the perfect way to start each day. I felt energized and filled with such a sense of peace that I could face anything the day would bring. I could respond to crises rather than react. I felt strong, stable and unable to be shaken. Life was good. Peace and happiness were my companions.

Alas, I fell out of the habit of my little, quiet coffee time with God. I can't even remember how or why. But when I fell out of that habit, I unraveled. I couldn't handle stressors in my life. I reacted to people and situations, unable to offer reasonable, level-headed responses. I turned into a grumpy ol' curmudgeon, horribly gruff and unpleasant. I snapped and barked at people, especially those who mean the most to me, like my wife Bea, over anything and nothing. Frankly, I didn't like myself very much – well, I didn't like the grumpy curmudgeon that I'd become. I knew that I had to step out of the Hamster-wheel of life, running my tail off, getting nowhere fast and resume sitting quietly with God.

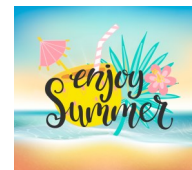
I'm getting back into the habit. It's not always early in the morning to start each day, not yet anyway. COVID fatigue is still hampering that effort. But I AM taking at least a few moments out of each day, sometimes multiple times a day, to have quiet time with God. Often, I say or think a centering prayer: "O God, you are my God, verily do I seek you in a dry and weary land." As I repeat it, I breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly. Even after just a few minutes, I feel embraced by God's love and filled with God's peace. All of my cares, worries and anxieties drift away, as if carried off by a warm summer breeze – truly, on the wings of the Spirit. I am beginning to feel human again – one created in God's image, not a grumpy ol' curmudgeon. If you've never tried some quiet time with God, I highly recommend it. The dividends are priceless.

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This summer, I pray that you will intentionally make time to rest. I pray that you will intentionally make time to sit quietly with God each day. Let go and let God, so that you can truly rest and relax. You see, I know from personal experience that this is the path to inner peace and happiness. And when we are at peace, all of the worldly cares roll off our backs like water off a duck. It empowers us to respond well. It enables us to make and enjoy quality time with those we love. Truly, I pray that you will enjoy “☑Summertime and the livin’ is easy. ☑” May it be so now and may it continue throughout the rest of the year. Amen.

Blessings of Peace and Happiness,
Pastor Dawn

Mission Impossible?

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

In this passage from Luke, we hear Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus is proclaiming God’s mission for him in the world right at the beginning of his ministry. I believe God has a special mission for each of us personally and a mission for every body of Christ – the church. I also believe God speaks to us in many ways to help us uncover our specific mission.

One of my professors in seminary challenged us to ask ourselves, “If your church were to close and no one misses it, are you fulfilling God’s mission?” I’m wondering what our specific purpose is for our existence here in Ann Arbor? What difference do we make and what would be missing if we were not here? How do we state that and how do we live that statement as the church of Jesus Christ? I think this is a question we need to answer together. We must discern God’s purpose for Bethlehem and then live into that purpose.

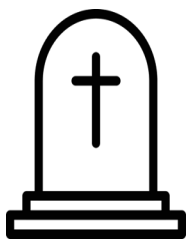
We talk about preparing for the future and that is something we must do, but I think it is important for us not to forget how vital we are today. If you were in church last Sunday, June 9, 2024, you could feel and hear the love and excitement of friends greeting friends in the sanctuary during the passing of the peace. And during the Congregational Meeting after church, you could hear the caring and commitment in the comments made.

We are a church looking to become more vital in our community and the lives of those around us, not just those in our presence today. *“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” (Jeremiah 29:11).* Listen as God is working through you and others. Listen to the stories of God working in our lives today. Listen to God speaking today – you know God is Still Speaking! Listen. Together we will find our purpose because *“nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).*

In Christ’s Peace,

Pastor Diane





**Bethlehem Cemetery Ann Arbor
Update from the Cemetery Board**

June 15, 2024

Greetings dear members and friends,

We had our first regular meeting this past week, following the annual congregation meeting this past Sunday. Our first business item was to elect the board officers for this next fiscal year. We have a full slate, and first with sincere thanks to Jim Lutz for his most recent six years of service, in addition to past years of board service. Thank you, Jim for your steady hand, and wisdom leading and guarding our resources carefully. We welcome you in an advisory capacity, now and in the future, you are willing to provide.

Marilyn Pearson has joined the board in her first term as elected member, and Susan Irwin for her first elected term, as elected member, following her completion of one year, filling an unexpired term. Both Marilyn and Susan bring much knowledge and strength as previous board members, and past board presidents.

Elected for board officer position's, are Mary Friend, vice president, Shannon O'Reilly as secretary, Jamie Dylenski as treasurer, and Mary Jean Raab as president.

Several projects were approved at our meeting and will be in motion immediately. Another DTE light pole will be added at the front northeast corner of the property, adjacent to the easement coming off the Jackson Rd. I94 expressway exit to improvement safety and security. Updated LED light will be used.

The black top, much of it laid last summer will be sealed/top coated, and the former dirt roads that had millings added in 2019, are ready for smoothing out and more millings added. Road maintenance, repairs and improvements are an every year project and expense. The cemetery bank account has a sub account for the roads, and we welcome donations, large and small at anytime.

Some larger projects, we will continuously update on; are our new website will have the data base of all internments added in the next couple months, and a feasibility plan for natural burials, also know as green burials is now being undertaken. The full proposal is laid out over the next four months.

Do you want to help your cemetery? In addition to donations, general purpose, or specifically dedicated; we welcome any and all volunteers. We have many tasks we need help with, and several of our areas of work, could use more hands, minds, and of course hearts. Email us at **BethlemCemeteryaa@gmail.com** or leave us a voice message at the church office number, 734-665-6149, extension 219.

We are looking forward to celebrating our 191st anniversary at 2801 Jackson Rd. 48103 with you, your family and community friends.

Most sincerely, your elected cemetery board. Have a good summer.

Veena Kulkarni-Rankin and Friends Concert



CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

United Church of Christ

A Multi-Racial, LGBTQ Affirming

Congregation

WE WALK!

Date: August 11th, 2024

Where: Church of the Good Shepherd

2145 Independence Blvd.

Ann Arbor, MI 48104

When: Sunday, August 11th, 2024 @ 4PM

Why: To benefit the 50th Ann Arbor Area CROP

Hunger Walk

Cost: Free Will Offering

mark your Calendar

July 3

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 4 **HAPPY 4th OF JULY!**

July 5

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

July 7

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

July 9

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

July 10

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Care Mtg., Lounge, 4:00 pm

July 17

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

July 16

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

July 17

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 18 **Church Office Will Be Closed**

- Ann Arbor Art Fair, Parking at BUCC

July 19 **Church Office Will Be Closed**

- Ann Arbor Art Fair, Parking at BUCC

July 20 **Church Office Will Be Closed**

- Ann Arbor Art Fair, Parking at BUCC

July 21

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

July 24

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 25

- Leadership Council, Lounge, 6:00 pm

July 27

Memorial for Lionel Korb, Sanctuary/Fellowship Hall, 11:00 am

July 28

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

July 31

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

August 2

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

August 4

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

August 7

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

August 11 Communion Sunday during Worship

- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

August 13

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

August 14

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

August 18

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

August 20

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

August 21

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

August 22

- Leadership Council, Lounge, 6:00 pm

August 25

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

August 26 **FOUNDING DAY-1833**

August 28

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

August 31

- U of M Vs. Fresno, Parking at BUCC 7:30 pm



Father's day treats from the June 16th Service

Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Day

On Saturday May 11 and May 18, two groups of volunteers from Bethlehem worked with additional volunteers from two other churches on a Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley build at 626 Lynne Ave in Ypsilanti. Tasks included installing insulation and painting. Many thanks to Larisa Jaskiewicz, Jamie Raab, Jesse Wilcox, Ellie Vasquez, Jennifer Vasquez, and Dani Webb for volunteering their time. Also thanks to Shannon and Pat O'Reilly, and Ron Dechert for providing lunch for all the participants.

Over the past several weeks, we collected money in support of our volunteer day. Most of this money came from free will offerings at two mini bake sales that we hosted during coffee hour. We were able to send a check to Habitat for \$1133.90. Plus, according to Habitat, each volunteer saves them about \$25/hour in construction costs. Thank you as always, Bethlehem members, for your generosity!



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.



McKay Scholarship Winners Congratulations to the following students:

Abigail Bowers
Brian Gotham
John Schenk
Kaitlyn Schwartz



**The above all attend
Michigan State University**

Jacob Paton, who has been
accepted to the University of
Virginia School of Law



Bethlehem Veterans & Friends Monthly Breakfast July 5 & August 2 @ 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.
Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer
734-476-7515 or via email at:
ziesemerth@gmail.com



Bethlehem Women & Friends Monthly Breakfast Tuesdays at 9:30 am July 9 & August 13

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

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received

May 15, 2024 – June 15, 2024

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Nancy Gentner Memorial
Douglas Mensch Memorial

Gifts listed were received through
June 15, 2024



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 July/August edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to: **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

Thank you all for your service to our church
community.



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!

Current Fiscal Year

May 2024	Year to Date	YTD Target	23 /24 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$347, 715	\$391,370	\$391,370
Expenses	\$426,078	\$483,556	\$483,556
Net	(\$78,363)	(\$92,186)	(\$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
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	Business Manager
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
 Business Manager: 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: Open Position
 Outreach: Katie Rowan
 Fellowship: Open Position
 Youth & Young Adult: Open Position
 Bethlehem Cemetery: Mary Jean Raab
 Nominations Committee: Open Position

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

President: Jim Rowan
 Vice President: Open Position
 Secretary: Barbara Schenk
 Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann
 At-Large Members:
 Teresa Beagle
 Open Position
 Ex Officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson