

# The Visitor

March 2025  
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Blessings,

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2a)*

Beloved Ones, the race before us is not a sprint, it's more like a relayed-marathon, requiring slow & steady effort from all of us. All of the forebearers of Bethlehem have run this race, passing the baton to each subsequent generation of members across our 191-year history. Tag, we're it. And on our journey carrying that baton together, we can see a milestone in the race looming larger – the calling of Bethlehem's next settled pastor. Before we reach that milestone, we've got a few legs in the race to be completed first.

First, we need to complete our revisions to the Bylaws. The work of the Bylaws Committee has been reviewed by the Leadership Council, and their recommendations for clarification have been submitted to the Committee. Very soon, the recommended revisions will be shared with the congregation. How those recommendations are shared with you will be different that the Committee originally planned. After sharing Phase I revisions, we realized that revisions to the remaining sections of the Bylaws could not be completed as planned. They are all far too interconnected and interdependent to be reviewed and shared as originally outlined. We are still discerning the best way to share the recommended revisions. Very likely, we will be sharing the full document with recommended revisions and rationale, plus the original Bylaws document for comparison. That will be a great deal to digest. So, to help everyone in the congregation, the Bylaws Committee is also tentatively planning to offer presentations and conversations, to answer questions and receive feedback. Based on feedback, final revisions will be made. We hope to present the revised Bylaws for congregational vote at the Annual Meeting in June.

Second, we need to complete information gathering, through all of the workshops. As of this writing (2/15/25), we have three workshops yet to go. The information gathered from all of them will be used by the Search Committee to generate a new Church Profile (our resume', if you will). That Profile is key for attracting optimal clergy candidates for consideration. So, your participation in the remaining workshops is essential for gathering accurate and comprehensive information.

*Continued on page 2*

## In This Issue

From Pastor Dawn	Page 1	March Calendar	Page 4
From Pastor Diane	Page 2	Transitional Workshop Schedule	Page 4
Lenten Services & Locations	Page 3	Lenten Devotionals	Page 4
Budget Report	Page 3	Announcements and Volunteer opportunities	Page 5
Memorials and Gifts	Page 3	Easter Flower Order Form	Page 6
Volunteer Thank You	Page 3	Items of Interest	Page 7
Cemetery Clean Up	Page 3	Who We Are	Page 8

Third, once the Search Committee is formed (soon and very soon), approved and commissioned, they will complete Bethlehem's profile. Once that profile is validated by the Michigan Conference, it will be shared through the UCC National setting. Clergy profiles of interested candidates will be sent to the Search Committee for review. They will review, interview, and assess all candidates carefully and thoroughly. Their Spirit-led discernment process will culminate in determining the best candidate to be brought before the congregation for consideration, during a *Candidating Weekend*. During that weekend, you'll be able to meet and greet the candidate. On that Sunday, the candidate will lead and preach in worship. Following worship, a special congregational meeting will be held to vote on whether or not to call the candidate to be the next Settled Pastor. If called, generally 2-3 months later, your new pastor will begin ministry with you.

The question has been asked recently – “What about you, Pastor Dawn? How long will you be with us?” The answer to that is: I will be with you for as long as it takes. I don't have a crystal ball, but I believe it is quite possible for you to receive your new pastor by this fall or by the end of the year. How exciting is that?!

So, let's keep running the race set before us! Together, with the help of God, we'll reach our milestone. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Pastor Dawn*

A few years ago the UCC posted the following image along with the question... “How will you March Forth?”



Here is what followed in an article:

“The United Church of Christ is calling you (*that's you and me*) to join a one-day initiative next month, to "**March Forth on March 4th**" with simple acts of justice work. ¶¶'As we March Forth, as one church, in a one-day effort, we hope that together we can raise awareness of justice issues around the world with simple acts of advocacy,' said the Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo, executive minister of UCC Justice and Witness Ministries. 'We are called to see the big picture in which people are struggling to live with dignity. Our faith challenges us to understand our lives are interconnected with theirs.'”

This is as much needed today as it was a few years ago and centuries ago and millennia ago...

The prophet Micah tells us, “He [God] has showed you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (6:8) NRSV

We have an opportunity to make a difference with a March Forth effort still today and maybe even more importantly today given all that is happening in our country and around the world. The March Forth, one-day initiative challenges each of us to look around us, find something we can do to stand up for justice and then do it. It's one day – your way. You choose how to advocate to improve the lives of people in your community, the nation or the world. Throw yourself into a project you are already passionate about: commit to buying fair trade products for your home or congregation; cut back on your electrical use; write letters to your representatives and president calling for compassionate immigration reform (or another justice issue); recycle; commit to prayer and study on justice issues in your community.

I am committing to March Forth for justice by writing more and more letters to my legislature representatives as well as the president to make my voice heard for justice. I would like to challenge each of you to March Forth as well in whatever way you are able.

It's ONE DAY ... YOUR WAY! How will you March Forth on March 4?

May the 4<sup>th</sup> be with you!

Blessings,

*Pastor Diane*

### Lenten Services Schedule & Locations

**Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025**  
 First United Methodist Church  
 at 7:00 pm

**Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025**  
 First Congregational  
 At 7:00 pm

**Good Friday, April 18, 2025**  
 First United Methodist Church  
 At 12:00 pm  
 Bethlehem UCC  
 at 7:00 pm

### Sanctuary Bulb Replacement

Thanks to the three J's, (Jesse, Jim, and John) with assistance from our maintenance person, Bill... the lights will continue to shine bright in the Bethlehem Sanctuary.



### MEMORIALS AND GIFTS

**Gifts Received January 16 - February 15**

**GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND**  
 Jay Katz  
 Robert Hoffmeyer



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.



### CEMETERY SPRING CLEAN-UP BEGINS APRIL 1

**REMINDER:**  
 All remaining Fall, Holiday, and Winter decorations will be removed from the graves starting April 1.  
 Please help us keep Bethlehem Cemetery neat and tidy.



### Current Fiscal Year

January 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	24/25 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$284,151	\$281,333	\$422,000
Expenses	\$279,119	\$348,371	\$522,557
Net	\$5,032	(\$67,038)	(\$100,557)

**March 2**

- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Youth Room 11:15 am
- Workshop: I Can See Clearly, 11:30 am following coffee in the Youth Room

**March 5**

- Ecumenical Ash Wednesday Services at First United Methodist Church 7:00 pm
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room, 6:45 pm

**March 7**

- Veterans and Friends Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 8:30

**March 9**

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

**March 10**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**March 11**

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 9:30 am

**March 12**

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Youth Room 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Care Ministry Mtg., Youth Room 3:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room, 6:45 pm

**March 16**

- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Youth Room 11:15 am
- Workshop: Shepherding 101, to begin following coffee in the Youth Room

**March 17**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**March 18**

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

**March 19**

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room, 6:45 pm

**March 23**

- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Youth Room 11:15 am

**March 24**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**March 26**

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- , 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room, 6:45 pm

**March 27**

- Leadership Council, Lounge 6:00 pm

**March 30**

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

**March 31**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

## Transitional Workshops

We have 2 of the 6 transitional workshops still to come in March 2025 in the Youth Room after coffee.

### March 2, 2025 - I Can See Clearly

This is one of the most exciting workshops in which we will engage! This is where we will consider all of the information discerned to date and further discern who God is calling BUCC to be and what God is calling BUCC to do. This is where we develop the vision for the future of BUCC.

### March 16, 2025 - Shepherding 101

This is the last big discernment piece, in which we will determine the qualities needed and desired in the next settled pastor for BUCC, in relation to the future vision of the church.

## Lenten Devotionals

Ash Wednesday is March 5, 2025.

The Member Care Ministry Team will be offering two Lent devotional books this year. A regular print book titled, "Into the Deep" is written by our Still Speaking Writers group within the UCC. We also have purchased a large print book from Augsburg Fortress for those who find a smaller print challenging.

Both copies will be available in the sanctuary beginning Sunday, February 16th.

We hope these books assist you on your Lenten journey.

**Bethlehem Veterans & Friends  
Monthly Breakfast**

**March 7th at 8:30 am**

Alpha Koney Island,  
4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer  
734-476-7515 or via email at:  
ziesemerth@gmail.com



# FOOD DRIVE



**Fight hunger where we live  
with Food Gatherers, the food  
bank & food rescue program  
serving Washtenaw County.**



## MOST NEEDED ITEMS

*\*Please no glass\**

- ✓ Hearty soups
- ✓ Canned meats
- ✓ Canned vegetables
- ✓ Packaged pasta & rice
- ✓ Whole-grain cereal & oatmeal
- ✓ Baking & cooking supplies
- ✓ Condiments
- ✓ Nut butters & jelly
- ✓ Kid-friendly snacks
- ✓ Baby food & formula
- ✓ Nutritional supplement drinks
- ✓ Personal care items:
  - soap & shampoo
  - dental hygiene kits
  - disposable razors



**Bethlehem Women & Friends  
Monthly Breakfast**

**March 11th at 9:30 am**

Alpha Koney Island,  
4389 Jackson Rd.

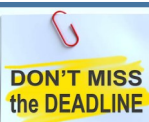
Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or  
siwin46@gmail.com for more info.



Scan this code to make a donation online.

Your donation benefits 140+ community programs serving our neighbors in need of food.

Food Gatherers | 734-761-2796 | www.foodgatherers.org



Refrigerator Page and Email Blast submissions must be received by **5:00 pm Tuesday each week.**

All submissions for the **April Visitor** are due by **March 15th**. Please be sure to include all dates, times and pertinent information. Please email submissions to:

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

### Great News!

The Bethlehem website has been updated to include easy access to sign up for opportunities here at church. On the front page, at the bottom, are one click buttons that take you to sign up sheets. You can add your name to be a [Liturgist](#), provide [Flowers for Sunday Worship](#), [Adopt a Coffee Hour](#), or [Sponsor a Live Broadcast](#). If you do not have access to a computer or need assistance please call the church office at 734-665-6149

## Food Gatherers Volunteer Days

Bethlehem will have two volunteer days at the Food Gatherers Warehouse at 1 Carrot Way:

Sat April 19, 1:00 - 3:30 PM

You can sign up at: [Food Gatherers Sign Up](#)  
**This is a fun way to work alongside fellow Bethlehem members to combat hunger in Washtenaw county. Join Us!!**



# Easter Flower Orders

Below is the order form for this year's Easter Flowers. We are offering different varieties of flowering plants this year that should have sustained blooming. We have provided images of the types of plants we are offering (colors may vary).

## 2025 Easter Flower Order Form

*Deadline for orders is Friday, March 21*

**FLOWER**

**# OF PLANTS**

**\$ AMOUNT**



Begonia Reiger

\$13.00

\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_



Kalanchoe

\$13.00

\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_



Martha Washington  
Geranium

\$13.00

\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_



Easter Lily (two stems)

\$23.00

\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Memorial Fund of your choice: \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to :Bethlehem Church - (write "Easter flower donation" in memo)

In memory of

In honor of

From: \_\_\_\_\_

phone number/email: \_\_\_\_\_

Any money left over after flower and delivery charges are paid will be placed in the General Fund



### Outreach Volunteer Opportunities

In addition to monetary donations, Bethlehem members support our partner organizations by volunteering. If you would like to be involved in this way, there are multiple opportunities.

#### Peace Neighborhood Center Food Distribution

Fridays 8:30 - 12:00

[Peace Food Distribution Sign Up](#)



Peace  
Neighborhood  
Center

#### Food Gatherers

Various shifts are available for signup at the Carrot Way warehouse sorting produce, or at the Delonis Center Community

Kitchen preparing and serving meals.

[Food Gatherers SignUp](#)



### Building Room Requests

Our building has many lovely spaces to use for meetings and workshops. We also have a demand for rental of these spaces.

PRIOR to planning an event, please contact office staff to verify room availability and to have your event scheduled on the calendar.

(734) 655-6149 or [info@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:info@bethlehem-ucc.org)

### BROADCAST SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP



We are pleased to be able to provide live-streaming and a new phone streaming service of the weekly 10 o'clock worship service. Many of our members are unable to attend in person and this provides a way for them to feel connected.

This program is funded by weekly broadcast sponsorships, memorials, and special donations.

#### *Have you sponsored a Broadcast lately?*

*Are you looking for a way to honor or remember a friend or family member? A weekly Broadcast Sponsorship is \$250. 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 get back with you.



### MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from all Ministry Team Meetings are due by the **1st of every month**. Please email minutes to:

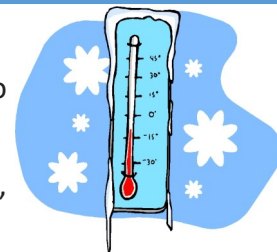
**[parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org](mailto:parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org)**

Thank you all for your service to our church community.

### BRRRR!!!!

As the temperature drops, we invite those who are able to walk, to park a bit further away to allow those who aren't able to walk a parking space in the church lot.

There is free parking available on 4th and 5th Ave on Sunday as well as at Muehling Chapel, the doctor's office next door and the parking structure at the corner of 4th and Williams.





**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 /</b>         |
| <b>Organist</b>                       | musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org |
| <b>Gwenda Mayes</b>                   | <b>Church Administrator</b>     |
| parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org |                                 |
| <b>Jim Rowan</b>                      | <b>Hand Bell Director</b>       |
| jrowan@umich.edu                      |                                 |
| <b>Lisa Reach</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: Jim Rowan
Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Diane White	Facilities: Steve Darr	Vice President: Open Position
Church Administrator: Gwenda Mayes	Education: Eileen Koprowski	Secretary: Barbara Schenk
Admin. Assistant: Lisa Reach	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: Open Position	Teresa Beagle
Video Director: Dan Blakeney	Outreach: Katie Rowan	Open Position
Maintenance Personnel: Bill Husted	Fellowship: Open Position	Ex Officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson
	Youth & Young Adult: Open Position	
	Bethlehem Cemetery: Mary Jean Raab	
	Nominations Committee: Open Position	