

# The Visitor

April 2025  
Bethlehem United Church of Christ

*"Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19b)*



I just had an interesting encounter. Two very pleasant women came to our front door, inviting me to join them in celebrating Jesus' memorial. They clarified for me that this is a celebration of his death, quoting Luke 22:19 as the reason for this celebration. First, I explained that I am a pastor, currently serving you. Then, I shared that we would most certainly be remembering his death on Good Friday and, more importantly, celebrating his resurrection on Easter morning. They were surprised by this. They asked me, "Why celebrate his resurrection more than his death?" My mind raced, wondering why anyone would end his story in the grave. To do so would reduce him to simply being a martyr. So, I explained, "His resurrection demonstrates the awesome power and love of God, by conquering sin and death. It is all about forgiveness." We shared some pleasantries before they left. As they were leaving, they appeared to be very perplexed. I pray that I sowed a seed that will flourish into a new and more complete understanding about the love of God known to us through Christ.

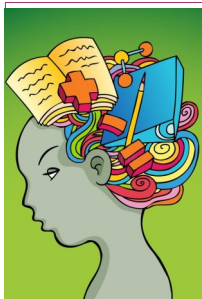
You see, our journey through Lent, takes us to the foot of the cross and the grave. On April 17th, when we join with other congregations for the ecumenical Maundy Thursday service (7:00pm at First Congregational), we will celebrate Holy Communion. We will hear those words again, *'On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread; and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same manner during the meal, he took the cup, and again after giving thanks said, "Drink of this, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."* We hear these words every time we celebrate communion. But do we always remember the profound weight that they carry? We must remember that following that Passover meal, Jesus was betrayed, arrested, abandoned, denied, tortured and hung on a cross to die. We need to feel the full weight and sorrow of all of that – because THIS is the full demonstration of God's love for us. But the story cannot end in the grave. The grave and its significance must dramatically contrast his resurrection on Easter morning. Therein lies the magnitude of God's love for us – love that can *never* be taken from us. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory; where is your sting?' Christ makes all things new!

Merciful and gracious God, we thank you for your amazing love. We thank you for walking with us on the rough road of life – a road with which you are deeply familiar through Christ Jesus. Help us to remember his gift of forgiveness. Help us to remember that "Do this in remembrance of me" is not reserved for communion. Truly, it is Jesus' call to us to share your profound love in our dark and hurting world, for the sake of all your beloved children. In his name we pray. Amen.

*Pastor Dawn*

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“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers.” (I Thessalonians 1: 2 -7 NRSV)

Some thoughts from Pastor Diane during Lent:

St. Paul was writing this letter to the church he, Silvanus, and Timothy founded in Thessaly, on the Aegean Sea. After leaving the city and founding several more churches, Paul sent Timothy back to the Thessalonians to see how they were doing. This letter is in response to the glowing report from Timothy brought back to Paul.

How many times do we hear good things about others or have a wonderful experience created by someone and yet we fail to acknowledge their gift to us? So often we take and forget to give – give back in gratitude for all that has been given us by God through others. Many post offices are closing on Saturdays and postage has gone up and up and up for lack of first-class mail. The art of letter writing seems almost extinct, yet a note or a letter has a personal, positive lasting affect on the reader and, as we see in Thessalonians, on many others for 2,000 years.

Gratitude, appreciation, acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit working around and among us is what Paul is doing in this letter. He is bringing encouragement to the discouraged in a way that they can receive it over and over and over to gain strength. We can do the same thing in this day and age when encouragement is so very much needed by all. We can make a difference in peoples lives with a simple note, card or letter of gratitude. It may be all they need to keep going.

Prayer:

O God, help us see and acknowledge the goodness in others and be grateful to You for placing them in our lives.

*Pastor Diane*

### Stewardship at Bethlehem

Planning has started for this year’s stewardship campaign. The theme for this year’s campaign is, “Faith in Action: No Gift Too Small – Time, Treasures, and Talent”. Stewardship materials will be sent out just after Easter. We are planning a “season of stewardship” that will begin on April 6, and culminate with a Celebration of Giving during the Sunday service on May 4. We ask that pledges be returned by May 5. If you have any stewardship questions, please contact Jim Rowan ([jrowan@umich.edu](mailto:jrowan@umich.edu)).

### Current Fiscal Year

February 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	24/25 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$316,232	\$316,500	\$422,000
Expenses	\$311,690	\$391,918	\$522,557
Net	\$4,542	(\$75,418)	(\$100,557)

### MEMORIALS AND GIFTS

**Gifts Received February 16 - March 15**

#### BROADCAST FUND

Ron Jaworowski, Laura Ann Jaworowski, and Wilma Wahl



When contributing to a special fund or collection, please use a separate envelope. Using your current fund or any other fund envelope, without indicating on that envelope what the funds are to be used for, may result in your contribution being applied incorrectly. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

## HOLY WEEK SERVICES

*Palm Sunday—April 13 @ 10:00 am*

Bethlehem United Church of Christ  
followed by a Pot Luck Brunch in the Fellowship Hall at 11:15 am

*Maundy Thursday—April 17 @ 7:00 pm*

First Congregational Church, 608 E. William St., Ann Arbor  
Tenebrae with communion

*Good Friday, April 18 at 12:00 pm*

Ecumenical Good Friday Service, First Congregation Church,  
608 E. William St., Ann Arbor  
w/ First United Methodist Church and Bethlehem United Church of Christ  
7:00 pm

Service at Bethlehem United Church of Christ

*Easter Sunday—April 20 @ 10:00 am*

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

All are invited and encouraged to participate in these community services.  
Please watch the refrigerator page and email blast for more information.

### President's Moment

As we enter into the Lenten season, we also enter into a very busy time for Bethlehem Church. It is a time when we begin to plan for the next year at Bethlehem, including budget construction, officer nominations and elections, and stewardship (see related article). In addition, we are in the early phase of a pastoral search, meeting in transitional workshops to begin to identify the identity and direction of Bethlehem as we prepare for the search. Additionally, the bylaws committee has been working hard to create an updated version of our bylaws. As these proposed bylaw revisions are circulated to the congregation, discussion groups will be formed to allow for processing of these changes. Expect to hear more on each of these efforts shortly. I wish to thank all of you - members of the congregation as well as our staff - who work very hard in so many ways to contribute to the vibrant life of our church, and to plan for the future. Your input and efforts are critical, and will continue to be critical as these projects progress. Please take advantage of opportunities to voice your thoughts, both in formal settings like workshops/discussion groups, and informally to church leaders and ministry teams. Your input is so important.

Yours in Christ,  
Jim

### 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

**April 2**

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

**April 4**

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

**April 6**

- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am
- Lenten Bible Study with John Schmale, Library 11:30 am

**April 7**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**April 8**

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney, 9:30 am

**April 9**

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Care Ministry Mtg., Youth Room 3:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room, 6:45 pm

**April 13 Palm Sunday**

- Sunday School during Worship
- Palm Sunday Brunch, Fellowship Hall 11:15 am  
Sign up sheet outside office

**April 14**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**April 15**

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

**April 16**

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

**April 17 Maundy Thursday**

- Ecumenical Service, First Congregational, 7:00 pm

**April 18 Good Friday**

- Ecumenical Service, First Congregational, 12:00 pm
- BUCC Service, Sanctuary, 7:00 pm

**April 19**

- Food Gatherers Volunteer day  
1 Carrot Way, 1:00 pm

**April 20 Easter Sunday**

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

**April 21**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**April 23**

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

**April 24**

- Leadership Council, Lounge 6:00 pm

**April 27**

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

**April 28**

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

**April 30**

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

## Palm Sunday Brunch

**Sunday April 13, 2025 at 11:15 am**

**Fellowship Dining Hall**

Please plan to attend our annual Palm Sunday Brunch. Enjoy good food and fellowship. Please sign up to bring a main dish, salad/side dish, or dessert.

There will be a free will offering basket available for the Youth Lenten Mission Project recipient, SAFEHOUSE, a center which provides housing and support to partners and families who need protection from domestic abuse.

If you have questions please contact Jan Eadie:  
jee21152@gmail.com

## College Care Cards

This is the time of year that our college students are finishing up the semester and will be preparing for their final exams. The Member Care Ministry team would like to send your student an encouraging card. If you think your student would appreciate receiving one, please send their name and address to:

[jen.foster@comcast.net](mailto:jen.foster@comcast.net)



### Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

#### Monthly Breakfast

**April 4th at 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

**April 8th at 9:30 am**

Alpha Koney Island,

4389 Jackson Rd.

Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or

siiwin46@gmail.com for more info.

**NO PARKING THIS SPACE IS RESERVED** Our neighbor to the north, Dr. Sandweiss, has found multiple vehicles parked in spaces, which are reserved solely for the use of his medical practice, on weekends, but especially Sundays. He operates a concierge practice and see patients on the weekends. He has asked that we notify Bethlehem members and other organizations using our facilities that vehicles found in their dedicated parking spaces will be towed at the owners expense. There are 9 spaces (3 directly behind the purple house, 5 along the back fence, and 1 beside the church) that are reserved exclusively for Dr. Sandweiss and patients 24/7. Below are signs attesting to such.

Please be respectful of Dr. Sandweiss's reserved parking. Your cooperation is most appreciated.



## Youth Lenten Mission Project 2025: SAFEHOUSE CENTER

Our children have a goal to raise \$2,500 for this worthy cause. During Lent, you can contribute to special offerings in worship, mail a check to BUCC (423 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 - memo: "SAFEHOUSE" or donate on the BUCC website under "Giving" Click [HERE](#) for link.



The posterboard is our board to track the progress of the goal of \$2,500. We will keep it in front of church during Lent. The children made small "houses" to help collect money from the congregation during the services. Thank you for your support.



## 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.

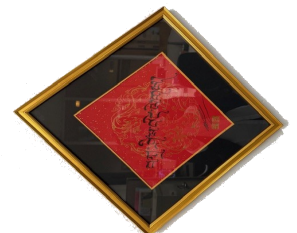


## Buddhist Open House

At their open house and celebration on March 1, 2025, the Karuna Buddhist Center (which meets in the upper room at Bethlehem) presented Bethlehem UCC with a gift. The inscription on the front reads "Tashi Delek!". This can be translated as "audacious greetings" or "good health".

On the reverse side, the message reads, "Happy Losar 2025 Wishing You a Happy and Prosperous Tibetan New Year of the Wood Snake. May this year bring peace, prosperity, and happiness. May your path be clear, wise, and filled with compassion." It is signed by the President, Lama Nancy Burks.

If you have the opportunity, please thank our neighbors for this special and thoughtful gift.



**DON'T MISS the DEADLINE** Please make sure that the office receives all **Refrigerator Page** and **Email Blast** submissions by **5:00 pm Tuesday each week. The 15th of each month by 12:00 noon** is the deadline for items to be included in the next edition of the VISITOR newsletter. Please email submissions to:

**churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org**

**Note:** Article's may be edited as needed due to space constraints and clarity.



### Food Gatherers Volunteer Day

Three Bethlehem members volunteered at the Food Gatherers warehouse on Feb. 15. Thanks to Gail Jennings, and Jim & Katie Rowan for sorting 748 pounds of produce for distribution in Washtenaw County.

### Upcoming Food Gatherers Volunteer Days

Bethlehem will have another volunteer day with Food Gatherers Warehouse at 1 Carrot Way:  
**On Saturday 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!!

### 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](#)



#### 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](#)



### BUCC Volunteer Days for Habitat for Humanity Huron Valley

Once again, Bethlehem is committed to local affordable housing and building strength, stability and new lives through our local Habitat for Humanity. We have two volunteer days scheduled for **Saturday May 3 and August 9, 9:00 - 4:00.**

Four or five volunteers are needed for each day. BUCC, along with other area churches and community volunteers, are revitalizing 423 Ainsworth Circle in Ypsilanti. For more details and a **sign up link**, please see the House of Faith flyer in this Visitor. To sign up, you may also click here: [Habitat Sign Up](#) (Use lockcode: Bethlehem)

We hope to give a generous donation towards the costs of the project. You can contribute by supporting our upcoming **Habitat Coffee Hour** after church on **April 27**, or by using this link to donate on the Bethlehem website: [Donate](#) Or drop a check at the church office or in the Sunday offering marked **Habitat Huron Valley.**

Thank you for helping build new lives with affordable housing in our community.

Thank you for helping build new lives with affordable housing in our community.



House of Faith



**GROUP NAME:** Bethlehem UCC  
**WHEN:** Saturday, May 3 & Saturday, August 9  
**TIME:** 9 AM - 4 PM  
**LOCATION:** 423 Ainsworth Cir., Ypsilanti  
 792 square feet - 3 bed - 1 bath  
 Located in the City of Ypsilanti  
 Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley is working to create affordable homeownership and a sustainable community for the people of Washtenaw County. For more than 30 years, Habitat's work has been a catalyst for stabilizing homes, families and communities.

#### 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 prior to their chosen date.

Location details, expected tasks, and additional details and will be emailed to all volunteers the week of each scheduled build day.  
 All MUST arrive by 9 AM and plan to stay until 4 PM, unless projects/tasks are completed earlier.

LEARN MORE:  
<https://givepul.se/whyidq>  
 lock code: Bethlehem

Questions?  
 Contact  
 Mariah Forger at  
[mariah@h4h.org](mailto:mariah@h4h.org)  
 or 734.968.8472



[www.h4h.org](http://www.h4h.org)  
 @H4HHuronValley



[www.h4h.org](http://www.h4h.org)

950 Victors Way, Ste. 50  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48106

734-677-1558

Building homes. Securing futures. Strengthening communities.



## 2025 Easter Gifts in Memory Of

### **Begonia Reiger in Memory of:**

Arlene Connell  
John & Selma Haab and Cal & Eleanor Seyfried  
Carole Katz  
Cliff Merryman  
Our Parents & Siblings

### **Kalanchoe in Memory of:**

Glenn Bailey  
Laura Baker  
Arlene Connell  
Nancy Heusel  
Carole Katz  
Joseph, Laura, John, Jean & Jennifer O'Reilly  
Our Parents & Siblings

### **Martha Washington Geranium in Memory of: Given by:**

Dave Beagle  
Betty Boman  
Marilyn Boyd  
Arlene Connell  
Martha Holliday  
Carole Katz  
Carole Katz  
Jay Katz  
Pat Merryman  
Robert & Jeanne Opperman  
Our Parents & Siblings  
Nancy Schenk

### **Easter Lily in Memory of:**

Glenn Bailey  
Kennyon Edwards  
Sherb & Emma Crippen  
Lloyd & Mildred Alber

### **Broadcast Fund:**

Joseph, Laura, John, Jean & Jennifer O'Reilly

### **Cemetery Maintenance Fund:**

Norman & Helen Grob

### **Given by:**

Cathleen Connell  
Mike & Dindy Haab  
Jill & Julie  
Ele Merryman Kotowski  
Ron & Diane White

### **Given by:**

Judy Bailey  
The Schenk Family  
Cathleen Connell  
The Schenk Family  
Katie & Carrie  
Pat and Shannon O'Reilly  
Ron & Diane White

### **Given by:**

Teresa Beagle  
Nancy, Greg, Kellie & Brian Gotham  
The Schenk Family  
Cathleen Connell  
Larry Katz  
Larry Katz  
Jill & Steve  
Katz Family  
Ele Merryman Kotowski  
Judy Coucouvanis & Family  
Ron & Diane White  
The Schenk Family

### **Given by:**

Judy Bailey  
Violet Edwards & Family  
Marjorie and Gene Alber  
Marjorie and Gene Alber

### **Given by:**

Pat and Shannon O'Reilly

### **Given by:**

Norma & Conrad Foster

## 2025 Easter Gifts in Honor Of

### **Kalanchoe in Honor of:**

Arlene Finkbeiner  
Korben & Autumn Kotowski

### **Martha Washington Geranium in Honor of:**

Gert Eisele  
Sally Jaworowski

### **Given by:**

Susan Irwin  
Ele Kotowski

### **Given by:**

Susan Irwin  
Susan Irwin





**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	