

The Visitor

June/July 2025
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1b-2a)

Beloved Ones,

You have been running the race before you – a marathon to be sure – and you have been running it faithfully! There is no holding you back! Your commitment and endurance are beyond compare! And because of your faithfulness to Christ, our Lord, and Bethlehem UCC you are ready for the next phase of the race – the search for your next settled pastor!

We have an outstanding Search Committee – Sue Buday, Dan Foster, Pat Huibregtse, Kurt Schmerberg and Dani Webb! They will be commissioned to their sacred work, during worship on June 1st. They will be devoted to finding the best candidate for BUCC. How long will this take? That, my friends, is in God’s hands.

Be assured that I will be with you until that time comes.

I am so very proud of you as a congregation. You’ve put in some really hard work to get to this point in your journey. I thank you for that. Now, you can look forward with great anticipation and excitement toward your future! Thanks be to God!

Blessings of Hope and Joy

Pastor Dawn

Update on Pastor Diane

Pastor Diane continues her recovery. She still has many, MANY weeks ahead of her, before she will be able to walk and return to work. She is officially “off-duty” for now. We’ll let you know when she’s ready to get back in the saddle. So, for now let’s care for *her* and shower her with our prayers and cards!



If you have pastoral care needs, please contact Pastor Dawn (517-256-4268) or contact the Church Office (734-665-6149).

In This Issue

From Pastor Dawn	Page 1	Habitat House Dedication	Page 5
Pastor Diane Update	Page 1	Book Sale	Page 6
Our 2025 Graduates	Page 2	Memorials	Page 6
Palm Sunday, Easter & Mother’s Day Pics	Page 3	Budget	Page 6
Handbell Buffers	Page 4	Outreach News	Page 6
Cemetery News	Page 4	Calendar for June/July	Page 7
Youth Lenten Project Update	Page 4	Who We Are	Page 8



Congratulations to our 2025 Graduates!!!



BRIAN GOTHAM

MSU Bachelor of Arts in Finance with a minor in Financial Planning & Wealth Management

Traveled to six countries on a 15-day Europe trip, four days after graduation, and will start working full-time on August 8th at Plante Moran in Ann Arbor as a Financial Advisor.



CARRIE SCHWARTZ

Graduates from Saline High School and will attend the University of Michigan in the College of Engineering to study biomedical engineering this fall.



KATIE SCHWARTZ

Graduated from Michigan State University in December 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology. In May, she started in the accelerated second degree BSN program at MSU to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.



EJ VASQUEZ

Master of Arts in Philosophy from EMU at the end of April. He is in the process of applying to PhD programs focused on Asian Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion, hoping to start Fall of 2026.



Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday



Mothers Day at Bethlehem



BUSY BELL BUFFERS



Members of the handbell choir dismantled and polished Bethlehem's bells this week. Their efforts keep our handbells in pristine condition.

Thank you!!



HOMEBOUND FRIENDS

We have many dear friends who remain homebound and they would love to see you and/or hear from you.

If you would like names and contact information, please reach out to the church office at (734) 665-6149.



Bethlehem Cemetery

2801 Jackson Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Greetings Members and Friends:

Have you visited our cemetery lately? People comment on the beauty and tranquility of this sacred space. We hope you will take the opportunity to read our report and financials in the church 2024-2025 annual report.

Have you seen our new website at Bethlehemcemeteryaa.org? The web site is in its second year, and the information is more rich and complete. You will find a database with all of the burial spaces listed and prices for lots and services. If you can't find what you are looking for, please email us at Bethlehemcemeteryaa@gmail.com. We are happy to research records back to the beginning in 1834.

Your Bethlehem Cemetery Association board members are proud of the work we are doing to maintain, grow and enhance this historic site not far from the center of the city.

Mary Jean Raab, President; Mary Friend, Vice President; Shannon O'Reilly, Secretary; Jamie Dylenski, Treasurer; Marilyn Pearson, member; Susan Irwin, member.

Lenten Youth Project– Collection for Safe House

Final Tally \$3,678.05. Thank you all!!



Habitat House of Faith Home Dedication

You are invited to attend the dedication of the House of Faith Home on Monday June 2, 4 - 6 pm at 626 Lynne Ave., Ypsilanti. Bethlehem volunteers worked on this home which the Cho family will own. Thank you to everyone who has supported this effort through your donations and volunteer hours!

Meet The Cho Family



Many Thanks To

TOYOTA

The J.F. Ervin
Foundation

2024 House of Faith
Partners

and everyone who worked on this home

our story

"We are the Cho family. We immigrated to the United States from South Korea a few years ago in search of a better life and a future for our children. When we first came here, everything seemed unfamiliar and difficult: the language was unfamiliar, the culture was very different, and finding a stable home was not easy.

Housing instability was more than just a problem of moving frequently; it was a huge burden that affected our entire lives.

Through it all, my family and I have leaned on each other to get through each day. My parents have worked tirelessly to make ends meet, and we've tried to adapt to our new surroundings. That's when I learned about Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, and I mustered up the courage to apply. In fact, when we applied, we weren't expecting to be accepted, we were just desperate to give it a try.

Since becoming involved with Habitat, we've realized that just having a stable place to live can lighten the weight of life a little bit. Life is still hectic and busy, but we don't have the same anxiety of not knowing when we'll have to move. We're able to focus more on what we need to do, and my parents are trying to focus on their jobs and not worry about housing. Things aren't completely better, but we definitely feel like we have a foundation to move forward from.

This experience has shown us firsthand that we didn't just get a home, we got a life-changing experience with someone's help, and we hope that one day we can give back as much, if not more, than we received. Thank you to everyone who listened to our family's story and stuck with us.

We are grateful."

-The Cho Family

Building homes. Securing futures. Strengthening communities.

734.677.1558
950 Victors Way, Ste. 50
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
www.h4h.org

Donate:
We are grateful for your donations!
Your gifts keep us building.
Learn about the ways to give at
www.h4h.org/donate

  
[@h4hhuronvalley](https://www.instagram.com/h4hhuronvalley)
[#UnderOneRoof](https://www.facebook.com/h4hhuronvalley)

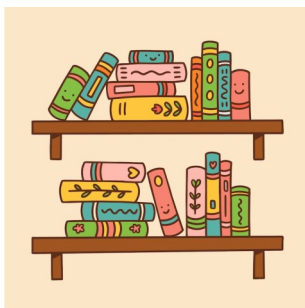
Book Sale

Started June 1, 2025

The annual book sale will run from
June 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025
in the Library.

Books will be 4 for \$1 !!!

There is a wide variety of novels and
children's books.



Donations of novels and children's
books are always welcome.

Sponsored by BUCC Outreach Ministry

BUCC does not accept textbooks, self-
help books, cookbooks, non-fiction or
spiritual books. These books can be
donated to the Ann
Arbor District Library or
Share House.

Food Gatherers Volunteers

Nine Bethlehem volunteers worked at the Food Gatherers warehouse on April 19. Thanks to Cathleen Connell, Judy Coucouvanis, Gail Jennings, Jim and Katie Rowan, Diana Slaughter, Isaac Wilcox, George and Porter for sorting 928 pounds of prepared foods for distribution in Washtenaw County.



Current Fiscal Year

April 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	24/25 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$391,083	\$386,833	\$422,000
Expenses	\$385,243	\$479,011	\$522,557
Net	\$5,840	(\$92,177)	(\$100,557)

MEMORIALS AND GIFTS

Gifts Received April 16 - May 31

GENERAL FUND

Pope Francis
Jay Katz
Christine Redies

YOUTH LENTEN PROJECT

Christine Redies

CEMETERY MAINTENANCE FUND

Fred & Lela Keppler
Hugh Keppler



IMPORTANT MESSAGE

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.

**June 1**

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Sanctuary 11:15 am
- Annual Congregational Mtg., Sanctuary 11:00 am

June 4

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 6

- Veterans Breakfast, Alpha Koney 8:30 am

June 8

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

June 10

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney

June 11

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Cemetery
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Care Ministry Mtg., Lounge

June 15

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

June 17

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

June 18

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 21

- Make Music Day, BUCC Outside Yard, 11 am

June 22

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

June 25

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

June 26

- Leadership Council, Lounge, 6:00 pm

June 29

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

July 2

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 4 Independence Day - Office Closed**July 6**

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Coffee Hour, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 8

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney

July 9

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

July 13

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

July 15

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

July 16

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 17 Ann Arbor Art Fair Parking at BUCC

- Church Office Closed

July 18 Ann Arbor Art Fair Parking at BUCC

- Church Office Closed

July 19 Ann Arbor Art Fair Parking at BUCC

- Church Office Closed

July 20

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

July 23

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

July 24

- Leadership Council, Lounge 6:00 pm

July 27

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

July 30

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm

Bethlehem Veterans & Friends**Monthly Breakfast****June 6 at 8:30 am**

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or

via email at: ziesemerth@gmail.com



VETERANS
Breakfast

**Bethlehem Women & Friends****Monthly Breakfast****June 10 and July 8 at 9:30 am**Alpha Koney Island,
4389 Jackson Rd.Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or
siirwin46@gmail.com for more info.



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	Church Administrator
parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org	
Jim Rowan	Hand Bell Director
jrowan@umich.edu	
Lisa Reach	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
 Church Administrator: Gwenda Mayes
 Admin. Assistant: Lisa Reach
 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:
 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