

The Visitor

September 2025

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



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.

(Hebrews 12:1)

Beloved ones,

We are entering into a new season. Yes, fall is upon us, bringing cooler, refreshing air and brilliant, colorful foliage. We also enter into a new program year of worship, education and numerous opportunities for fellowship and preparations for search and call.

Yes, the Search Committee has been busy over the summer. They completed and submitted Bethlehem's 'snapshot profile,' – a preview for interested clergy, before the actual search and call process begins in earnest. And they've been chipping away at the BIG, detailed church profile, using much of the information generated through all of the workshops earlier this year. There is still more detail needed – especially for solidifying Bethlehem's vision for the future.

To assist the Search Committee, we'll be holding a visioning workshop to pick up where we left off in March. Immediately after worship in the sanctuary on Sunday, September 21st we're going to build on the vision. (refreshments will be provided) If you missed any or all of the prior workshops, here is your opportunity to weigh-in on who we are and aspire to be! Your input will be integral in attracting the very best fit in a pastor to walk with you into the future. Be there!

And stay tuned, we may be picking your brains for other information to help the Search Committee button-up the Church Profile and guide them in the search and call process. These are EXCITING times! Let's run this race before us and look to the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ, our Lord! Amen.

Blessings of Hope,

Pastor Dawn

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COMMUNITY PARTNER SNAPSHOT

Are you familiar with Jewish Family Services (JFS)? I wasn't until recently and, like many seeing their name, had no idea that the largest number of people served are NOT Jewish. One's religious affiliation or lack thereof has no bearing on access to JFS services. It is based on need. The scope of community services they provide in Washtenaw County is broad and provides safety nets for much of the vulnerable population. Here are just a few highlights of services provided:

Support for Seniors and Caregivers – including care coordination with assistance from case managers (referral and resource navigation), crisis intervention, nutritional support, transportation, counseling & more.

Nutritional Support through Nourish Nutrition Services – including:

A specialty pantry that may be accessed twice monthly, with curbside pickup Thursdays 11-4:00 no appointment necessary. For emergency food needs, email nourish@jfsann Arbor.org.

Congregate meals at the WISE Center at the J (Jewish Community Center of Ann Arbor) 3 days a week. Lunch is served Mondays and Wednesdays at noon, and Fridays at 12:30. Lunches are FREE to everyone over 60.

Meal Delivery is also available to homebound residents through the WISE Meals at Home program. They provide up to 10 kosher style and halal meals (5 lunch & 5 dinner) through their meals on wheels program. They also provide as well as medically-tailored meals for specialty populations and Medicaid recipients. Residents must be 60 or older, have medical documentation of homebound status and live within the JFS service area. To see if you qualify for meal delivery, contact JFS at nourish@jfsann Arbor.org.

Career Services are offered to all unemployed and underemployed residents of Washtenaw County.

Refugee and Immigrant support services – including resettlement services, ESL classes, citizenship classes, employment assistance, assisting entrepreneurs achieve goals, small business hub (for business planning, financial literacy coaching, customer & employee retention best practices), digital literacy, as well as basic needs support for food and housing.

Go to www.jfsann Arbor.org to learn more.

Like so many non-profit community services organizations, JFS has lost Federal funding. Therefore all donations and/or volunteer support would be greatly appreciated.

Join them in their Walk-a-Mile-in-My-Shoes event, September 28th. This is the link to the event registration: <https://app.giveeffect.com/campaigns/37398-2025-walk-a-mile-in-my-shoes>. You may also contact Gabby Markowicz (gabbym@jfsann Arbor.org), she would be happy to provide more information. JFS is located at 2935 Birch Hollow Dr. #1, Ann Arbor 48108.

Blessings of Hope,

Pastor Dawn

September Calendar



September 3

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

September 5

- Veterans & Friends Breakfast, Alpha Koney 8:30 am

September 7

- Community Time, Lounge, 9:30 am
- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship

September 8– Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room

September 9

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

September 10

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Cemetery
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Sanctuary, 6:45 pm

September 13

- U of M vs Central MI Game 12:00 pm

September 14

- Community Time, Lounge, 9:30 am
- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Outreach Meeting, Library 11:30 am

September 15 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

September 16

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

September 17

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Member Engagement Mtg., Lounge 3:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Sanctuary 6:45 pm

September 21

- Community Time, Lounge, 9:30 am
- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship

September 22 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

September 24

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

September 25

- Leadership Council Mtg., via ZOOM 6:00 pm

September 27

- Big House Concert, Zach Bryan 6:30 pm

September 28

- Community Time, Lounge, 9:30 am
- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship

September 29 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

Michigan Football Parking

Volunteer Sign Up

Dates:

Aug. 30th, New Mexico, 7:30 pm

Sept. 13th, Central MI, Noon

Oct. 4th, Wisconsin, TBA

Oct. 18th, Washington, TBA

Nov. 1st, Purdue, TBA

Nov. 29, That Ohio Team, Noon



4 Volunteers are needed for each game. Times slots will vary depending on game start time. All dates are in SignUp Genius. Times will be added once game time is announced. Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

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

Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

September 5th at 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or



VETERANS
Breakfast



Bethlehem Women & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

September 9th at 9:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or siirwin46@gmail.com for more info.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY VOLUNTEER DAY

Bethlehem volunteers Larisa Jaskiewicz and Jamie Raab joined volunteers from First Presbyterian Church Saline for a productive day of construction at 423 Ainsworth Circle in Ypsilanti. Tasks for our group included interior framing and nailing in hurricane clips to secure the roof, while the other group worked on exterior framing and insulation. Jamie reports enjoying using the "wiggle saw," more formally known as the oscillating saw.

Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to mail a check to Habitat Huron Valley for \$1380, exceeding our goal for this year and also last year's donation. Thanks to all who supported our fundraising efforts, and to our bakers Jennifer Vasquez, Larisa Jaskiewicz, Jamie Raab, and Katie Rowan.



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](#)

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](#), [Community Time Host](#), 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

NOTE:

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.

Current Fiscal Year June 1, 2025 to May 31, 2026

July 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	24/25 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$68,277	\$72,628	\$435,770
Expenses	\$63,965	\$77,716	\$466,293
Net	\$4,312	(\$5,087	(\$30,523)



Bethlehem Cemetery

The cemetery has recently been enhanced with the addition of landscaping rocks.

The entrance gardens and Veterans Garden are beautiful.

Please stop by and take a look.





First United Methodist Church
of Ann Arbor

51st Annual Ann Arbor Area CROP Hunger Walk

Bring non-perishable food items
for Hope Clinic

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Wednesday, August 27th, 2025 from 5 PM to 6:30

Recruiters Drive-Thru at FUMCAA, 120 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Pick up information, posters and stickers for your congregation/organization!!!

Recruiter Drive-Thru Needs for Love Thy Neighbor

Ramen Noodles
Individual Pudding Cups
Pop-top cans of ready-to-eat soup
Individual Snack packs of cookies
Chocolate or vanilla Ensure
nutritional drinks
Individual packages of mixed
nuts/trail mix
Pop-top cans or packets of tuna or
chicken
Star Kist, Bumble Bee (or other)
tuna snack kits
Chef Boyardee canned ready-to-
eat meals with a pull top lid

Contact: Mary Pratt @
m.pratt33@yahoo.com
734-975-5310

They step down and **WE STEP UP!!!**

GOAL: \$40,000

Why step up??

**Severe funding cuts have stopped
resources and food deliveries here
and world-wide.**

**Sign up and pledge now to assist
CWS in feeding the hungry!!**

25 % of funds will go to:

Breakfast Program @ St. Andrew's
Love Thy Neighbor @ FUMCAA
Community Action Network [CAN]
FedUp Ministries
Packard Health
Growing Hope

VISIT US AT:

www.crophungerwalk.org/AnnArborMI

www.facebook.com/annarborcrophungerwalk



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
 —Galatians 6:2

**Advocacy is essential to participating in
 God's mission in the world.**

Gifts to the **Neighbors in Need** offering support ministries of justice and compassion in the United Church of Christ, including the UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy in Washington D.C.



The UCC Washington D.C. Office was called into being by a resolution at General Synod 10 in 1975. The office was assigned to identify, analyze, and forecast social issues which called for the attention of the church. The work has always been guided by the discernment of the UCC through General Synod gatherings and resolutions that collectively witness to God's call.

Each week the Washington D.C. Office creates an action alert to help give church members the opportunity to contact legislators simply and easily. In 2025 these weekly alerts have encouraged church members to fight for disability housing accommodations, to stop the gun violence epidemic, and to support environmental justice for all.

Thank you for your generosity!



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	
Bill Husted	Maintenance
Dan Blakeney	Video Director

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

Executive Committee, Leadership Council, and Ministry Team Chairs

Executive Committee

President: Jim Rowan
Vice President: Ron Dechert
Secretary: Barbara Schenk
Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann
Ex Officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson

Leadership Council

President: Jim Rowan
Vice President: Ron Dechert
Secretary: Barbara Schenk
Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann
Business Ministry: Steve Darr
Member Engagement Ministry:
 Judy Coucouvanis /Jenny Foster
Outreach Ministry: Katie Rowan
Worship Ministry: OPEN
Education Ministry: Diana Slaughter
Ex officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson

Ministry Team Chairs

Business Ministry Team Chairs:

Finance Sub Committee: P.J. Lindemann

Facilities Sub Committee: Steve Darr

Personnel Sub Committee: Ron Dechert

Education Ministry Team Chair: Diana Slaughter

Member Engagement Ministry Team Co Chairs:

Jenny Foster & Judy Coucouvanis

Outreach Ministry Team Chair: Katie Rowan

Worship Ministry Team: OPEN

Pastoral Relations Committee Chair: Kurt Schmerberg

Bethlehem Cemetery Board Members:

President: Mary Jean Raab

Vice-President: Mary Friend

Secretary: Shannon O'Reilly

Treasurer: Jaime Dylenski

Elected Members: Marilyn Pearson & Susan Irwin

Ex officio: Rev. Dawn Christenson