

The Visitor

October 2025

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Only you can prevent forest fires.

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment. ... So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:21-22a & 24)

Have you noticed how anger and vitriol seem to be spilling over unchecked in our country and elsewhere in the world? It has resulted in the senseless and callous taking of lives, from innocent children in their Minnesota chapel at the start of the school year, to the assassination of prominent political figures. Murder is wrong, pure and simple, as we are told in the ten commandments and as Jesus reiterates. But what about anger?

Anger itself is not necessarily wrong. We should be angry at injustice in the world. Even Jesus became angry at and condemned injustice, crying out against it. We need to channel our anger, as Jesus and the prophets did, to dismantle systems of oppression and injustice. When anger is wrong is when we weaponize it against each other. Whether our anger was originally directed at someone because of wrongdoing or misdirected at others matters not. When anger does harm and results in violence, it's wrong. And we need to understand that the harm and violence that stem from it are preventable.

In Ephesians 4:26 we are told, *"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."* If we let the sun set on our anger, it tends to smolder and grow. Eventually it grows and bursts into flames and, in the process, consumes us along with everyone and everything in its path, like a raging forest fire. Jesus implores us to, in essence, throw water on the smoldering embers of our anger, by telling us to, *"be reconciled with your brother or sister."* We need to douse our anger

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with one another so that its embers cannot spark a forest fire. Only we can douse our anger, no one else can do it for us. As Smokey the Bear says, *“Only you can prevent forest fires.”*

Reconciliation begins deep in our hearts with the love of God. The choice is ours to act on it – to use God’s love to put out the embers of anger, before they destroy our relationships. It’s easy to be childish and say, ‘but they started it!’ It takes courage and integrity to face the one we are angry with and have a conversation. We may find that our anger resulted from a misunderstanding, as is often the case. Even if we were wronged, should we not offer the same forgiveness that we receive through Christ? That’s what we profess every time we pray the Lord’s prayer – *“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”* Forgiveness and love are the cooling water that can snuff out the embers of anger and allow us to be reconciled. Then we can face the trials and tribulations of this life TOGETHER. And TOGETHER we can transform the world for the better. May it be so. Amen.

Pastor Dawn



Bethlehem Cemetery

This devotional was read at the beginning of our recent Cemetery Board Meeting. It is intended for the beginning of Lent but is appropriate anytime. This was written by Yael Lachmann, a UCC minister and speaks to the sacredness of the space we are charged with caring for.

“For many years, the route of my morning run took me along a river and through the grounds of an old cemetery. As I followed the cemetery’s winding paths, my racing mind would begin to settle. By the time I got home, I knew which items on my to-do list mattered most and which were actually not important at all. Maybe it was the fresh morning air, or the negative ions rising off the river. But I’m pretty sure that the clarity I found each morning had a lot to do with the cemetery itself.

Running past the graves of those who had once lived and worked and loved in that place, I couldn’t help noticing the dates on their headstones and doing the math in my head: this one lived nearly 90 years, this one only 38. Each morning, those gravestones served as a tangible reminder that our days are always numbered. Every day, that cemetery offered me a gentle invitation to count my own days, and to make wiser choices about how I spend them.

It’s not unlike the invitation we receive on Ash Wednesday, as we feel the touch of ashes on our forehead and hear the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This week as we prepare to follow Jesus into the wilderness of Lent, we too are invited to reflect - as he does – on what is most important in this life. This Lenten season, we are called to decide what in this beautiful, broken world is truly worthy of our numbered days, our finite attention, our life’s energy... and what is not. May we choose well.”

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

| August 2025 | Year to Date Actual | YTD Target | 24/25 Budget |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Offerings and Income | \$106,494 | \$105,500 | \$435,770 |
| Expenses | \$ 98,740 | \$130,639 | \$466,293 |
| Net | \$ 7,754 | (\$ 25,139) | (\$ 30,523) |

October Calendar



October 1

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

October 3

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

October 4

- U of M vs WI, 12:00 pm

October 5

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room, 11:00 am
- CROP walk, First United Methodist Church, 2:00 pm

October 6– Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room

October 8

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

October 10

- Pretzel Baking, Kitchen Fellowship Hall 8:00 am

October 11

- Pretzel Baking, Kitchen Fellowship Hall 8:00 am

October 12

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am

October 13 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

October 14

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

October 15

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

October 18

U of M vs Washington, TBD

October 19

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am

October 20 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

October 21

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge

October 20 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

October 21

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge

October 22

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

October 23

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

October 26

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am

October 27 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 5:30 pm

October 29

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

Michigan Football Parking Volunteer Sign Up

Oct. 4th, Wisconsin, Noon

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.



HOMEBOUND FRIENDS

We have many dear friends who remain home-bound 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.

OCTOBER VISITOR

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received

July 16, - September 15, 2025

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Jay Katz

CEMETERY FUND

Norm & Helen Grob

BUCC FAMILY



Welcome New Member Amy Nicholson

Rally Sunday



Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

October 3rd 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

October 14th at 9:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or

siirwin46@gmail.com for more info.



Cemetery Fall Clean-up Schedule Reminder

All Spring/Summer decorations should be removed from the graves by November 1. After that date, any remaining Spring/Summer decorations will be removed by the cemetery maintenance crew.

Please help us prepare for Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and 2026.

Your Cemetery Board thanks you in advance.



Building homes. Securing futures. Strengthening communities.

August 19, 2025

C/o Outreach Ministry Team
Bethlehem United Church of Christ
423 S. Fourth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2394

Dear Bethlehem UCC,

THANK YOU!

Because of you, we help families and individuals build strength, stability, and independence through affordable homeownership and improved housing. Because of you, we are building homes, securing futures, and strengthening communities.

Your support changes lives like the Smith Family:

"Since partnering with Habitat, we have witnessed true community support and have been immersed in a sense of belonging. The warmth and generosity of everyone we have encountered has made us feel welcomed, safe, and thoroughly capable. Becoming homeowners through Habitat marks a new chapter for us - one filled with hope, opportunity, and stability. This stability means our children can grow up without the fear of having to move again, allowing them to truly settle into and make this house a home," the Smith Family, Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley homeowners.

Thank you for making this opportunity possible for the Smith Family and hundreds like them.

Thank you for your generous gift of \$1,380.00 which we received on 08/13/2025. I invite you to visit our website (www.h4h.org) to learn more about all of our programs and how your support changes lives. We are so grateful to you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Stanton".

Sarah Stanton
Chief Executive Officer

Please save for your records:

Tax Receipt: Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley is a 501(c)(3) organization Tax ID # 58-2874694. No goods or services were provided in exchange for this donation. Please retain this letter for your records. Your donation may be tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Please consult a tax or financial professional. HHV has the right to use & distribute donated funds as it seems necessary in the furtherance of its mission.



www.h4h.org

950 Victors Way Ste. 50
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

734-677-1558



Thank you
for your
amazing
support of
Habitat and
the House
of Faith!



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!

Please click [HERE](#) to donate via BUCC's online giving.

We will continue to collect throughout the month of October



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