

The Visitor

November 2025

Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Counting Our Blessings

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven . . ."

(Matthew 5:3)

My friends, I must confess that when I was a child I didn't like the fall. In fact, I would feel quite blue in the fall. Of course as a child, it was because the fun, warm summer was over; I had to go back to school; days grew shorter; the weather became cold and rainy (but not cold enough for snow to play in); and everything turned a dull brown. I can still find myself feeling a bit melancholy in the fall. And yes, some of those things that affected me as a child, like the growing darkness and the end of lush, green summer leaves and warm breezes, add to that melancholy feeling. But the fall also stirs lingering grief, from significant losses in my life that all occurred in the fall – my maternal grandmother in November of 1966 (the only grandparent I ever knew), my dad in October of '99, mom in October of '06, and my brother in November of '22. I know that I'm not alone in my grief or how the fall affects my spirit. All of us who have experienced loss feel lingering grief and are reminded of our losses every fall, with All Hallow's (Holy) Eve, All Saints Day, and (at Bethlehem) Totenfest. So, how do we cope, when fall and loss weigh so heavy on us? I believe the key is found in our blessings.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he tries to comfort us by reminding us of how God blesses us. He knows that we all will experience the trials and tribulations of life. Yet, God is ever-faithfully with us and is there to comfort and support us through it all. I think it's often only in retrospect, following the storms of life, that we can see God's hand blessing us. That's what I try to focus on, when I'm feeling low – my blessings. Inevitably, counting my blessings will lift my spirits.

Bing Crosby put it to music in the 1954 movie, *White Christmas*, when he sang, *"When you're worried and you can't sleep, just count your blessings instead of sheep. And you'll fall asleep counting your blessings."* There really is something to that. When I'm feeling low, I try counting my blessings and make a point to thank God for each and every one of them. One by one, as I count them and give thanks, the grief and sadness begin to dissipate. I can find myself smiling, even through my tears. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* Counting our blessings, offers us the comfort we need to face each new day. For me, counting my blessings reminds me of the goodness of God – all blessings come from God. They remind me that I'm not alone – that God is with me always and loves me beyond measure. And that is true for you too – your blessings come from God; God is with you always and loves you beyond measure. Nothing can ever change that.

So, whether you feel like me in the fall or whether you're looking ahead with dread to Thanksgiving and the ensuing holiday season, take time to pause – count your blessings and thank God for them. May counting them with a grateful heart lift your spirits too. Amen.

Abundant Blessings of Comfort and Peace,

Pastor Dawn

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"We are blessed to be a blessing."



I heard this quote twice this week within a twenty-four hour period. My ears perked up when I heard it the second time. I immediately thought, "This is something important. Why is God telling me this at this time and what am I to do with it?" (That's just how my mind works. Crazy isn't it!) Then I got it! This message is for all of us and the title of my message for November!

We have so much, you and I, and I'm not talking about money and things. We have the love of God, our Savior. We have Jesus walking by our side and the Holy Spirit guiding us. We have the love of family within our church. We are loved, so we can give love to others. Is that what the quote above is about? This sure sounds like the kingdom of God on earth!!!!

So let's start asking ourselves questions... "How am I being a blessing?" Or stated differently, "How am I bringing love to those who have little or none?" "How am I being a blessing to others who have not yet heard of Jesus saving grace in their lives?" "How am I being a blessing in each particular situation?" "How am I showing love to others?" And then find the answers...

Jesus came into this world to serve, not to be served and to give, not to take. As followers of Jesus, can we do anything less?

Blessings,

Pastor Diane



Totenfest Memorial Service Sunday, November 2, 2025 at 10:00 am Worship

Please join us for our Totenfest Memorial Service where we will invite everyone to come forward to light a candle in memory of loved ones who have passed away in the last year.

There will be a special insert in the bulletin remembering all who have passed away since November 2024.



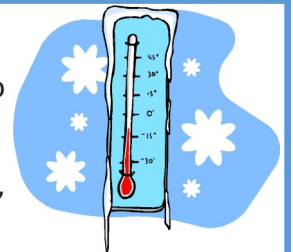
NOTE:

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.

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.

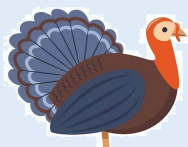
There is free parking available on 4th and 5th Ave on Sunday as well as at Muehling Chapel, the doctor's office next door and the parking structure at the corner of 4th and Williams.



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

September 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	25/26 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$128,891	\$140,667	\$435,770
Expenses	\$141,498	\$174,186	\$466,293
Net	(\$ 12,607)	(\$ 33,519)	(\$ 30,523)

November Calendar



November 1

- U of M vs Purdue TBD

November 2

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

November 3 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

November 5

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

November 7

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

November 9

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

November 10 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

November 11

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

November 12

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Cemetery 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Sanctuary 6:45 pm

November 13

- Leadership Council Meeting, ZOOM 6:00 pm

November 14

- Pretzel Making, Kitchen and Fellowship Hall 8:00 am

November 15

- Pretzel Making, Kitchen and Fellowship Hall 8:00 am

November 16

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

November 17 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 1:00 pm

November 18

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

November 19

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

November 20

- Ecumenical Service for the Transgender Day of Remembrance, FUMC, 12:15 pm

November 22

- Hanging of the Greens 9:00 am

November 23

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am

November 24 Office Closed

- Hand Bell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

November 27 Office Closed

Thanksgiving

November 28 Office Closed

- Executive Committee Mtg, ZOOM 6:00 pm

November 29

- U of M vs That Ohio Team, 12:00 pm

November 30

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

Michigan Football Parking Volunteer Sign Up

Nov. 1st, Purdue, 7:00 pm

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.

NOVEMBER VISITOR

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received

September 16, 2025—October 15, 2025

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Ron White

Pretzel Making at BUCC!

Bethlehem United Church of Christ Pretzels!!

Pretzel Rollers Needed

The Member Engagement Team invites all members to take part in a fun and interactive pretzel rolling and baking event. This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with others.

Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025

Time: 9:00 am until done (typically by 1 pm)

Location: Willimann Fellowship Hall

Please click [HERE](#) to sign up.

Pretzels for Sale

Pre-order details will be announced soon via the Refrigerator page and Friday group email.



CHRISTMAS WREATHS

It is time to green up the church with our beautiful Christmas Wreaths

Sign up forms are by the office to order a wreath in memory or in honor of a loved one.

Please have all orders to the office by :



November 14, 2025

Small Wreaths are \$25

Large Wreaths are \$30

You may place your order form in the offertory basket or through the mail slot in the office door.

November Food Drive

As the holidays approach, The Outreach Ministry Team is sponsoring a food drive to benefit Food Gatherers.

The government shutdown has increased the need.

Please consider picking up a few extra items as you shop each week to contribute to this effort often.

Let's fill our barrels!



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 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

November 7, 2025 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

November 11, 2025 at 9:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

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

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

Ann Arbor Area CROP Walk 2025

Four Bethlehem members joined 103 walkers from 14 local congregations and organizations in support of global and local hunger relief. One quarter of the funds will be dedicated to local programs including Peace Neighborhood Center, the St. Andrews Breakfast Program, Love Thy Neighbor FUMCAA, Community Action Network, FedUp Ministries, Growing Hope and Packard Health. The rest goes to international hunger relief efforts. Many thanks to our Plama team walkers: Gail Jennings, Jackie Katz, Jim & Katie Rowan. Thanks as well to the congregation for your generous donations. We raised \$1,772!

Thank you to all who participated and contributed!



SAVE THE DATE

Hanging of the Greens

Saturday, November 22, 2025 @ 9:00 am

Your help is needed to decorate the church.

Plan on joining us to get ready for the Christmas Season!

For more information, please contact Jan Eadie (jee21152@gmail.com)



The Mitten and Sock Tree will also be going up on November 22, 2025 ready for all your wonderful donations!



COOKIE EXCHANGE!!

December 14, 2025 at 11:15 am following Worship. Member Engagement is sponsoring a Cookie Exchange during Community Hour.

Bring one dozen of your favorite holiday inspired cookies to exchange for a dozen of your choice.

If you have any questions please contact

Jenny Foster at

bucc.memberengagement@bethlehem-ucc.org



Mark your Calendars for Important Dates:

- 11/10/25 Christmas Wreaths Orders Due
- 11/15/25 Community Pretzel Rolling, 9:00 am
- 11/22/25 Hanging of the Greens, 9:00 am
- 12/7/25 Advent Workshop/Potluck, 11:00 am
- 12/10/25 Service of Comfort & Light for when Christmas Hurts, 1:30 pm
 - 12/14/25 Cookie Exchange, 11:15 am
 - 12/14/25 Caroling for Homebound, 12:30 pm
 - 12/24/25 Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 pm



Bethlehem Cemetery

October was a busy month at the cemetery. In addition to the usual Fall cleanup, tree trimming/removal was completed in Blocks 12A, 14, 15, and 16. 5-men, 2-boom trucks, numerous chain and pole saws, 1 remote controlled stump grinder, 1 semi-sized brush pick up truck, Two 10 hour workdays. Plans are now being made to move through the remaining blocks. Regarding all of this, we thank you in advance for considering a donation to our tree fund.

Happy Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving to all from your Cemetery Board.



IMPORTANT NOTICE BUILDING SAFETY AND SECURITY

Bethlehem utilizes a callbox system to gain access to the building for BUCC and a separate call-button for GroundCover. We are also in the process of updating the entry system for all our tenants.

When entering the building—whether using the callbox system or if you are a keycard holder—please do not allow unknown individuals to enter with you. *"Piggyback" entering with anyone entering the building is not allowed. GroundCover individuals must use their call-button to notify GC of their arrival.*

Do not allow others to enter the building even if they are familiar to you. This helps ensure that each tenant, including Groundcover and others, has the ability to manage access to their own spaces and be aware of who is entering.

If approached, you should kindly say:

"I'm sorry, I can't let you in. Please contact the person or organization you're here to see so they can assist you."

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in helping to keep all those who use our building safe.



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