

The Visitor

December 2025

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

From the Pastor



Where were you
when the child was born?
Looking for a way to follow a star,
Seeking a treasure to keep in my heart.

What did you hear
when the child was born?
Singing the love of Mary and Joseph,
Dancing the light with angels above.

What did you see
when the child was born?
Witnessing a piece of Heaven on Earth,
Wondering how God can love me so much.

What did you feel
when the child was born?
Hoping for life for those without hope,
Longing for one who would change our world.

What did you do
when the child was born?
Welcoming the child into my life,
Marveling at the gift that came to be.

What did you say
when the child was born?
Praying for truth to be known by all,
Thanking the one whose grace makes us free.

When the Child was Born

by Louise Margaret Granahan

from compilation in *Shine on, Star of Bethlehem* by Geoffrey Duncan

What did you give
when the child was born?
Offering my faith to follow his truth,
Awaiting the promise of love without end.

What were you given
when the child was born?
Knowing that I am held in God's love,
Trusting that I am also a gift.

Beloved ones, as we journey through Advent and the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, may we all remember that the child, Emmanuel, is not found in boxes, packages or bags. The true treasure of that child is found deep within our hearts. We are each filled with and held in God's gift of love. You, dear ones, each of you, are blessed gifts. May you give of yourselves a portion of the gift of God's love, to warm the hearts of countless others. The well of God's love that is within you can never run dry. So, give it away in abundance.

Abundant blessings of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy,

Pastor Dawn

P.S. Merry Christmas

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December 10th at 1:30 PM

Let's mark this time of the year, by gathering in the warm glow of God's healing love. Many of us have experienced a wide array of losses. In the wake of loss, we carry the weight of grief, sorrow and pain that darken our lives. This solemn service provides sacred space for us to contemplate our losses, and to cry out to God, releasing some of our heavy burdens to God's good care.

Whatever your loss, whatever you are feeling that weighs you down darkening the bright holiday season, join us. Lean on one another and on God's everlasting arms and find rest for your souls. Come for healing and comfort and find solace in the Light of Christ – the Light of Hope.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES



Wednesday, December 24
Christmas Eve Worship

7:00 pm

A Candlelight Service and a musical celebration featuring the
Bethlehem Chancel Choir
and
Bethlehem Handbell Quartet

End of Year Contributions

As 2025 comes to a close, please remember that any Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA needs to be received by the Church Office no later than **December 31, 2025**. Thank you very much for considering Bethlehem UCC in your year-end giving. We are truly grateful. Wishing you Christmas Blessings and a Joyous New Year!



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

October 2025	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	25/26 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$167,014	\$181,571	\$435,770
Expenses	\$177,849	\$194,289	\$466,293
Net	(\$ 10,835)	(\$ 12,718)	(\$ 30,523)

Thank you to all who donated wreaths that decorated our outside windows during this Christmas season. Below are the names of those whose memory and/or honor they were given.

Christmas Wreath Memorials and Honorariums

In Memory of	Given By
Edith K. Bailey	Judy Bailey
Glenn W. Bailey	Judy Bailey
John c. Yahr	Judy Bailey
Norm & Helen Grob	Norma & Conrad Foster
Cliff & Pat Merryman	Ele Kotowski
Jay Katz	Jacquie Katz
Raymond & Elizabeth Lambarth	Joe & Jan Eadie
Steve Grzesiak	Bryan Oxender
Charles & Frances Birch	Marilyn Pearson
Charles Raab	Mary Raab
Ron White	Rev. Diane White
In Honor Of	Given By
Arlene Finkbeiner	Mike & Harriette Ehnis
Doris Whitlock	Mike & Harriette Ehnis

DECEMBER VISITOR

Memorials and Gifts

Gifts Received

October 16, 2025 - November 15, 2025

GENERAL FUND

Carol Carzon
Jay Katz

FOOD GATHERERS

Carol Carzon

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Carol Carzon
Myrna Pancost
Carl Waltjen

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Arlene Connell
Glen Diuble

CEMETERY MAINTENANCE FUND

Glen Diuble



ADVENT WORKSHOP AND POTLUCK

Our annual church Advent Workshop and Potluck will be held Sunday, December 7th at 11:15 am in the Fellowship Dining Room. Come create beautiful Christmas crafts to take home, or give as gifts. Please sign up on the church bulletin board to bring a main dish, side dish/salad or dessert to share. If you have dietary restrictions plan to bring a dish that you will be able to enjoy. Make sure to put the date on your calendars to attend for good food, fun, fellowship and crafts. Hope to see you there!

The Education Team

COOKIE EXCHANGE!!

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

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



Here we go a caroling...!

December 14th 12:30pm

Please let Pastors Diane or Dawn know if you plan to go caroling, so we can plan accordingly to feed you before heading out to sing.



De-greening the Church - Mark your calendars!

De-greening the church will happen on Saturday, January 3th at 9:00 am. As the Christmas season winds down, it's time to pack up and store away the decorations in the Sanctuary. We will need lots of help to accomplish this again. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

December Calendar



December 1 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

December 3

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room 7:00 pm

December 5

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

December 7- Communion Sunday

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Advent Wkshop & Potluck, Fellowship Hall, 11:15 am

December 8 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

November 5

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room 7:00pm

December 9

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

December 10

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Lounge 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Service of Comfort & Light for when Christmas Hurts, Sanctuary, 1:30 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room 7:00 pm

December 14

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am
- Cookie Exchange, Youth Room 11:15
- Caroling for the Homebound, Parking lot, 12:30 pm

December 15 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

December 16

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

December 17

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge, 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room 7:00 pm

December 18

- Leadership Council Mtg., ZOOM 6:00 pm

December 21

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

December 24

- Brass Ensemble, Lounge 4:30 pm
- Christmas Eve Service, Sanctuary, 7:00 pm

December 28

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

The Christmas Fund Offering

"...THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM..."
LUKE 2:9



Christmas Fund 2025

"And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them..." —Luke 2:9

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

To donate by mail to the Christmas Fund, send a check payable to "The Christmas Fund."

Mail to:

The Pension Boards-United Church of Christ, Inc.
Christmas Fund
75 Remittance Dr., Suite 1637
Chicago, IL 60675-1637

You may also donate online by clicking the link [HERE](#) and donating directly to the Christmas Fund via the PBUC website. Thank you and God Bless You and Yours this Holy Season.

Bethlehem Veterans & Friends Monthly Breakfast

December 5, 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

December 9, 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.

Children's Moment



IMPORTANT NOTICE BUILDING SAFETY AND SECURITY

Bethlehem utilizes a callbox system for building entry, as well as a separate call-button for Groundcover. We have recently installed a new doorbell camera at the 5th Avenue entrance for building tenants, and we will begin using this system for BUCC after-hours activities. This upgrade allows us to keep the 5th Avenue door locked while still providing secure, electronic access.

To help maintain a safe environment, we ask that you only allow individuals who are part of your group to enter with you. This ensures that each tenant—including GroundCover and others—can manage access to their respective spaces and remain aware of who is entering the building.

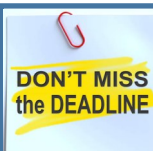
If someone who is not part of your group asks to be let in—even if they are familiar to you—please respond politely: “I’m sorry, I can’t let you in. Please contact the person or organization you’re here to see so they can assist you.”

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in helping keep our building safe for everyone.

OUTREACH News

Bethlehem made donations to each of our partner organizations. Checks of \$3,000 each were presented to Alpha House by Mary Jean Raab, Peace Neighborhood Center by Jane Schmerberg, and Food Gatherers by Katie Rowan. Your pledges to the BUCC budget made these donations possible.

Thank you for your generosity!



Refrigerator Page and **Email Blast** submissions must be received by **5:00 pm Tuesday each week.**

All submissions for the combined edition of the **January/February Visitor** are **due by December 30th**. Please be sure to include all dates, times and pertinent information. Please email submissions to:

churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org

BUCC OUTREACH

Outreach Holiday Appeals 2025

It's that time of the year when we begin thinking of ways our congregation can "reach out" to our local agencies to help children and families during the Holiday Season. The **OUTREACH MINISTRY** and **EDUCATION MINISTRY TEAMS** are joining together to promote these appeals that you can access online. In addition, a box is located in the Sanctuary for **Meijer, Kroger, and Target** gift cards and donations.

Peace Neighborhood Center



Peace
Neighborhood
Center

Over the past 50 years, PNC has provided critical services and opportunities to more than 16,000 people. Opportunities to help this year are:

- *Amazon Wish List
- *Gift Cards

Please visit their website to find out how you can make a difference in the lives of the children and families that are part of the Peace Family.

[PNC Link](#)

Alpha House



Alpha House Shelters

between 50-60 families each year.

During the holidays, they plan to offer these opportunities to help out:

- *Gift Cards
- *Shelter Needs

Please visit the link below to find out how you can help.

[Alpha House](#)

[Link](#)

Food Gatherers



Food Gatherers continues to need donations of money and food to help access affordable, healthy food for Washtenaw County.

Last year Food Gatherers distributed 7.3 million pounds of food—the equivalent of 6 million meals—through their network of partner programs.

Our gifts of food and money can help eliminate hunger in Washtenaw County.

Use the link below for financial contributions.

Also, canned foods can be put in the Food Barrel at the church.

[Food Gatherers](#)

Safe House Center



The SafeHouse Center provides safety, advocacy and resources for survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault and their children. They are also trying to help end domestic violence and sexual assault in Washtenaw County. Their 24/7 helpline is 734-995-5444.

[Safe House](#)

Jewish Family Services



Jewish Family Services provides a broad array of services to those in need regardless of religious affiliation.

These include:
Support for Seniors and Caregivers
Nutritional Support
Career Services
Refugee and Immigrant Support Services

Link to donation page:

[Jewish Family Services](#)



1 Carrot Way
Ann Arbor 48105

Phone: 734-761-2796
www.foodgatherers.org

September 22, 2025

Bethlehem United Church Of Christ
Rev. Dawn Christenson
423 S 4th Ave
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2301

Dear Reverend Christenson,

Thank you for your generous donation of \$3,000.00, which we received on September 19, 2025. Together, we are fighting hunger in our community during Hunger Action Month.

Today, one in seven of our neighbors, including one in seven children, is experiencing food insecurity. Your gift helps kids start the school year with one of the most important tools they need to thrive: food.

Your generosity makes it easier for students and their families to bring home nutritious food to enjoy together through programs like Food Gatherers' Healthy School Pantry Program. This program distributes healthy food at local schools, empowering families to prepare and enjoy healthy meals together.

When kids have the food they need to thrive, they can reach their full potential in school and beyond. Thank you for filling the plates and fueling the futures of children and families in our community!

Gathering with you,

Eileen Spring
CEO/President

*Thank you so much for
your generosity!
We so appreciate your
support!*

*Food Gatherers is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
No goods and services have been received in exchange for this gift.*



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: Sally Elmiger
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