

The Visitor

March 2026

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

From the Pastor



Lent – Are you giving up or giving away?

Lent began in the early church, to serve as a period of spiritual preparation, in honor of Jesus' forty days of preparation in the wilderness, before beginning his earthly ministry.

This year, our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday and will carry us through Holy Week, ending with Easter Sunday. Even now thousands of years after its inception, Lent still serves as a period of spiritual preparation and renewal.

During Lent, some people still follow the age-old traditions of giving something up and ritual fasting. The self-imposed deprivation should be accompanied by prayer and perhaps meditation – making Lent a truly spiritual journey for reflection, reconciliation and renewal. But, do we need to deprive ourselves in order to have a meaningful spiritual journey? No. Truth be told – many people dislike Lent immensely because they dislike the idea of sacrifice. So, they often do nothing at all. What's the alternative? – Try giving something away.

Give something away?? Yes. But not necessarily anything material – though that is quite acceptable if you are able. Beyond that, we can give of our time and talents. Love to bake? How about baking something for Community time? Love to cook? How about making a meal for a shut-in or someone recovering from illness or surgery? Love to sing? How about joining the choir? Love to tinker and fix things? How about helping the Facilities Ministry Team with projects around the church? Love to help people? Why not volunteer for the rotating shelter? Love visiting people? How about becoming a Stephen's Minister? Love catching up with old friends? How about helping the Member Engagement Ministry Team by calling some of our shut-ins and others who need a little love

Prayerfully, ask yourself – *What CAN I do?* Then do it. Give a little of yourself to your fellow creatures and to God. No rocket-science involved. Just a little love. In fact, love is something all of us have in abundance from God. Jesus calls us to give it away. So, give it away, each and every day throughout Lent. Who knows, it may become a habit. Friends, that kind of habit can change the world. So this Lent, try giving away as much of God's love as you can, in as many creative ways as you can think of. Let's change this world, one step at a time and one heart at a time.

Abundant blessings to you ... pass it on.

Pastor Dawn

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“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” Pablo Picasso

Each and every one of us has a gift – that something we do so well. Often times it is hidden from our view and the view of those closest to us. Many years ago I worked in leadership development at Oakwood Hospital. At one of my seminars, a doctor shared the following experience about discovering a gift. (I have changed the names for anonymity.)

Dr. Joe’s son, 14-year-old Ray, was born with downs syndrome. When Dr. Joe looked at Ray, he saw a boy who would never play ball, never go to college, never be like all the other kids; all he noticed and focused on were the things Ray couldn’t do. He saw him as handicapped. Ray was invited to a youth retreat and Dr. Joe went along as a chaperone as he didn’t think Ray should go without a parent present. One evening all the kids and leaders were sitting around the campfire and they were going to do an exercise where the told each person in the circle why he/she was special. Dr. Joe was wary of this activity and worried about what the kids would say about Ray. As each child came to Ray, Dr. Joe heard his son described as touched by the Holy Spirit, spirit filled, filled with love for others, selfless, and kind. Dr. Joe realized then that his son was his gift of love and his son had the gift of showing others, including himself, the Holy Spirit at work on earth. Dr. Joe had put his son in a handicapped box that always found him failing - he was shown a new and different Ray through other peoples eyes; a Ray of love and hope with possibilities for his future. He treated Ray much differently from that day on.

Often we find our gift(s) when we hear from other people. Have you found the meaning of your life in your gift? Have you found the purpose of your life as you give your gift away? What about us together as Bethlehem United Church of Christ? We have a collective gift of love for all to share as people following Jesus Christ in downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan? How do we give this gift away?

Pretzels will be made the weekend of March 14 and rollers are needed – join in as we create something wonderful to be enjoyed by others. The Homeless Shelter Program is coming to Bethlehem March 23- 30, and you have an opportunity to welcome with love folks who are often left out in the cold. Perhaps you are able to sign up to help stay overnight as a host offering hospitality to all who stay with us. Bring your favorite dish to the Palm Sunday potluck as a way of sharing love. We will join with other churches for Holy Week worship – come and show up as we meet new friends and worship together. Join a choir or a team or come to crafters on Wednesday’s. Come and share your gift – give it away – others are waiting to receive.

Blessings,
Pastor Diane

**Memorials and Gifts Received
January 1 - February 15, 2026**

BROADCAST FUND

Laura & Joseph O’Reilly

GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Norma Crouch
Robert Hoffmeyer
Jay Katz
Jane Schneider

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT

Ryan Connell



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

January 2026	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	25/26 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$251,467	\$290,513	\$435,770
Expenses	\$283,723	\$310,862	\$466,293
Net	(\$32,256)	(\$20,349)	(\$30,523)

March

March 1 Communion Sunday

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

March 2

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

March 4

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

March 6

- Veterans and friends breakfast, Alpha Koney

March 8 -Daylight Savings Time Begins

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

March 9 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

March 10

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

March 11

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Lounge 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Sanctuary 7:00 pm

March 13

- Pretzel Baking, Fellowship Hall/Kitchen 9:00 am

March 14

- Pretzel Baking, Fellowship Hall/Kitchen 9:00 am

March 15

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am
- Violin and Organ Benefit Concert for Michigan Immigrant Relief Center, Sanctuary 7:00 pm

March 16

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

March 17

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

March 18

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm
- Member Engagement Meeting, Lounge 3:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Sanctuary 7:00 pm

March 22

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

March 23

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am
- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

March 24

- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm
- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

March 25

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

March 26

- Leadership Council Mtg., via ZOOM
- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

March 27

- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

March 28

- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

March 29- Palm Sunday

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Palm Sunday Brunch, Fellowship Hall 11:00 am
- Rotating Shelter, Youth & Choir Rooms 7:00 pm

BUCC PRETZELS!!

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

Volunteers needed to "bake and roll" anytime from 9 am until we are done (typically by 1 pm). Come when you can and leave when you must. In addition to rolling, some volunteers are needed to help in the kitchen and to help with cleanup. No experience is necessary, but head covering is required (hair bonnets provided). Please click below to sign up.

**Thank you from the
Member Engagement Team**



Order details will be announced soon via the Refrigerator page and Friday group email.

Easter Flower Orders

Below is the order form for this year's Easter Flowers. We are offering different varieties of flowering plants this year that should have sustained blooming. We have provided images of the types of plants we are offering (colors may vary).

2026 Easter Flower Order Form

Deadline for orders is Friday, March 6

FLOWER

OF PLANTS

\$ AMOUNT



Begonia Reiger

\$13.00

\$ _____



Kalanchoe

\$13.00

\$ _____



Martha Washington
Geranium

\$13.00

\$ _____



Easter Lily (two stems) \$23.00

\$ _____

Memorial Fund of your choice: _____

\$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:

\$ _____

Make checks payable to :Bethlehem Church - (write "Easter flower donation" in memo)

In memory of

In honor of

From: _____

phone number/email: _____

Any money left over after flower and delivery charges are paid will be placed in the General Fund

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 29 at 10:00 am at Bethlehem UCC

followed by brunch in the Fellowship Hall at 11:15 am

Maundy Thursday, April 2 - TBD

Good Friday, April 3 at 7:00 pm

Ecumenical Service at King of Kings Lutheran w/ Shalom Community Church & Bethlehem UCC

Easter Sunday, April 5 at 10:00 am at Bethlehem UCC



Palm Sunday Brunch

Sunday March 29, 2026 at 11:15 am in the Fellowship Dining Hall. Please plan to attend our annual Palm Sunday Brunch. Enjoy good food and fellowship. There will be a sign-up sheet outside the Church Office to bring a dish to pass. If you have questions please contact Jan Eadie: jee21152@gmail.com



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities. Please click [HERE](#) to give electronically from BUCC's online giving page. Thank you for your gifts!



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

Beautify Our Sanctuary with Flowers

There are many opportunities for you to donate flowers yet this year to beautify the sanctuary in honor or memory of your loved ones or in recognition of a special event! If you are interested, please sign up either on the board in the hallway in front of the office or by [SignUp Genius](#). If you have questions, please contact the church office at: churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org




Bethlehem Cemetery

CEMETERY SPRING CLEAN-UP Beginning APRIL 1, 2026

Reminder:
All remaining Fall, Holiday, and Winter decorations will be removed from the graves.

Please help us keep Bethlehem Cemetery neat and tidy.



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.



Bethlehem Women & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

March 10th 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 Veterans & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

March 6th at 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer
734-476-7515 or via email at: ziesemerth@gmail.com



What better way to enjoy the company of your fellow church members than over a good cup of coffee? We are looking for two volunteers a week to adopt-a-coffee hour on Sundays after the 10:00 am worship service in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers will need to set up, make coffee and clean up. Please click the link [HERE](#) to be taken to the Sign Up Genius website where you can choose your slot. Your willingness to participate in this act of fellowship is sincerely appreciated.



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 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL HOST
THE ROTATING SHELTER PROGRAM
MARCH 23 - 30, 2026**

We are seeking to enlist 4 volunteers for each night who will stay overnight, provide information on where restrooms are, and answer other questions.

The time period for volunteers will be 7:00 pm until approximately 7:00 am the next morning.

If you are able to volunteer, you will receive additional information prior to the dates of the program.

We are also asking for donations of 25 homemade or purchased individually wrapped sandwiches per night, and 25 granola bars or other individually wrapped snacks per night.

Please use the link **SignUpGenius Rotating Shelter** below to sign up. If you would like to sign up without using the link, please call or email one of the contact people below to facilitate your sign up.

Katie Rowan: rowank55@gmail.com, 734-846-2160

Mary Jean Raab, raabmj@aol.com, 734-395-5589

[SignUpGenius Rotating Shelter](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080A4FA4AF2BA1FD0-61141040-rotating#/)

www.signupgenius.com/go/5080A4FA4AF2BA1FD0-61141040-rotating#/



BETHLEHEM
UN TED CHURCH OF CHRIST



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: Sally Elmiger
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