

The Visitor

August 2026

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

WELCOME REVEREND MATTHEW!

Thoughts from Pastor Diane

In Ecclesiastes 3:1 we read, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." We are in the middle of an emotionally challenging and exciting time. A time to say goodbye and a time to say hello. A time to say thank you and a time to say we're open to new beginnings. A time to let go of the old and a time to look forward to the new.

On July 26, we said goodbye to Pastor Dawn after experiencing her love and care for three years as we began to heal and renew as Christ's Church. Pastor Dawn helped us look back at who we have been, look to who we are today and focus on the future of who we will be as we move forward as Bethlehem UCC.

With all of this in mind, we now welcome Rev. Matthew Hogue-Smith to the pulpit on August 2, as our newly called Senior Pastor. Let's open our hearts and minds to all the possibilities ahead of us. Let's open our arms to embrace Pastor Matthew and his husband, Travis as they begin their new life with us here in Ann Arbor. Your smiles, greetings, notes and conversations will be greatly appreciated by them both as they settle in.

Another thing they will appreciate is if we all wear our name tags. If you do not have a name tag, please contact the office at (734) 665-6149 so one can be made for you. This simple act will help Pastor Matthew and Travis feel more comfortable with each and every one of us. As we all look to the future, let's also forget the words, "**We've always done it this way.**" Let's look to what might be, what can be, and all the possibilities of a future with God. For we read in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God's blessings as we move forward together,

Pastor Diane

In This Issue

From Pastor Diane	Page 1	News to Know	Page 2
August Calendar	Page 2	Cemetery News	Page 3
Memorials	Page 2	Happenings	Page 3
Budget	Page 2	Who Are We	Page 4

August 2026

Aug. 2. Communion Sunday

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

Aug. 5

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm

Aug. 7

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

Aug. 8

- Habitat Volunteer Day 9:00 am

Aug 9

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

Aug. 11

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney- 9:30 am

Aug 12

- Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery, 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm
- Member Engagement Mtg., Lounge/ZOOM 12:00 pm

Aug 16

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

Aug. 19

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm

Aug. 23

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

Aug 26 Founding Day 1833

- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm

Aug. 27

- Executive Committee Mtg., vis ZOOM

Aug. 30

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

Memorials and Gifts Received June 1 – July 15, 2026

Broadcast Fund

Laura & Joseph O'Reilly



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.

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 665-6149.



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

Submissions for the **September Visitor** are **due by August 15th**. Please be sure to include all dates, times and pertinent information. Submissions may be edited for clarity and space limitations. Please email submissions to:

churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org

Fiscal Year June 1, 2025 to May 31, 2026

May 2026	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Target	25/26 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$336,397	\$435,770	\$435,770
Expenses	\$432,682	\$466,293	\$466,293
Net	(\$96,285)	(\$30,523)	(\$ 30,523)

Congratulations to the following recipients of the McKay Scholarship Awards 2026

Carrie Schwartz - University of Michigan

Abby Bowers - Michigan State University

John Schenk - Michigan State University

Jacob Paton - University of Virginia School of Law

Use of Church Spaces

Using the various rooms around the church is welcomed. Please remember that we do not have 24-hour custodial care and that there may be a renter or other group using the space immediately after you. The expectation is that you leave the room as you found it.

- **Return all items to their original location including items borrowed from other floors.**
- **Wipe tables and pick up refuse.**
- **Take trash to the outside bins**
- **Please vacuum or sweep floors if needed.**
- **Replace furniture as it was found**

Everyone's cooperation is sincerely appreciated as we endeavor to be supportive of one another and keep our lovely building looking its best. Thank you.

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.



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 Cemetery

Update from Bethlehem Cemetery

The April tornado damage/clean-up continues at the cemetery. The 28 fallen trees and stumps have been removed, the broken fence has been restored, and the damage to the building's roof is repaired.

However, more tree trimming is still needed. Work is being scheduled for necessary asphalt repair to fix the roads where fallen tree roots lifted and broke up the asphalt and created some potholes.

The costs of maintaining the trees and roads are always our largest yearly budgeted expenses. However, this year has been more challenging than usual and unfortunately both our tree fund and road funds are depleted.

With all this in mind, we thank you in advance for any monetary donations you may choose to direct our way to offset these larger than normal expenses.

Enjoy the rest of Summer!!

Mary Jean, Mary, Jamie, Shannon, Marilyn, and Susan

Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

August 7th at 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or via email at: ziesemerth@gmail.com



VETERANS
Breakfast



Bethlehem Women & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

August 11th 4389 Jackson Rd.

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



BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

PHONE: 734-665-6149

EMAIL: INFO@BETHLEHEM-UCC.ORG

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. Matthew Hogue-Smith Pastor

pastor@bethlehem-ucc.org

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: Teresa Beagle

Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann

Ex Officio: Rev. Matthew Hogue-Smith

Leadership Council

President: Jim Rowan

Vice President: Ron Dechert

Secretary: Teresa Beagle

Treasurer: P.J. Lindemann

Business Ministry: Steve Darr

Member Engagement Ministry:

Judy Coucouvanis /Jenny Foster

Outreach Ministry: Katie Rowan

Worship Ministry: Michelle Loukotka

Education Ministry: Diana Slaughter

Ex officio: Rev. Matthew Hogue-Smith

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: Michelle Loukotka

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. Matthew Hogue-Smith