

The Visitor Newsletter

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

November 2026

FROM
THE
PASTOR



Beloveds,

Can you believe that just a little over two months ago, I stood before you as your newly called pastor. I was and still am in the early process of learning all of your names, locating all of the light switches, and understanding the rhythm of the congregation. Now, somehow, we are already planning Advent

and Christmas.

Ministry has a strange relationship with time itself. We prepare ourselves for one season while we are still living into another. Advent and Christmas hymns are being selected while the leaves have not fully left the trees yet. Believe it or not, by the time everyone else begins to start talking about Christmas, the church has already been planning for it for months!

While planning is necessary, I am learning that there is a difference between preparing faithfully and rushing emotionally. The calendar is moving us forward and part of me is still taking in this new beginning.

Unfortunately, relationships and trust cannot be scheduled on the calendar. Belonging develops though accumulated moments. I think that is why I am looking forward to Advent this year.

Advent reminds us that preparation does not require rushing. Mary received a promise but the child did not appear the next morning. There was a season of waiting and anticipation. I will say that waiting is not the same as doing nothing. Mary carried Jesus while she wondered, traveled and prepared.

I truly believe that something is already taking shape here at Bethlehem. We have begun to worship, serve, laugh, and dream together. There are hopes emerging and possibilities beginning to rise to the surface. Yet, we do not need to force or rush any of these possibilities.

Advent is a reminder to resist that urgency. It invites us into a space where we can prepare for what is coming while remaining present for what is already happening among us. Soon, we will sing the old advent hymns and tell the story of love entering the world again. I look forward to experiencing these traditions with you for the first time. My hope is that we will not rush past this beginning that we are sharing.

Wild Blessings,
Pastor Matthew



Totenfest Memorial Service - Sunday, November 1 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 2025.



CHRISTMAS WREATH MEMORIALS / HONORARIUMS

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 **Wednesday, November 18, at 12:00 pm**. Small Wreaths are \$25 and Large Wreaths are \$30.



Hanging of the Greens - Saturday, November 28th at 9 am

Your help is needed to decorate the church for Christmas. Plan to be here to give the Sanctuary some extra sparkle.

For more information email Jan Eadie jee21152@gmail.com



MITTEN TREE

In the spirit of the season, we are collecting **new mittens, gloves, hats and scarves*** to help those in need in our area. Items will be distributed to local charitable organizations.

*Need comes in all sizes, so new items of any size are welcomed!



ADVENT WORKSHOP & POTLUCK

Celebrate the season with good food, creative fun, and warm fellowship! Join us on Sunday, December 6, at 11:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Dining Room for our annual Advent Workshop and Potluck.

Enjoy a shared meal, connect with friends, and make beautiful Christmas crafts to keep or give as thoughtful gifts. Please sign up on the church bulletin board to bring a main dish, side dish/salad, or dessert. If you have dietary needs, please bring a dish you can enjoy.

Save the date—we would love to celebrate with you! - The Education Team



COOKIE EXCHANGE!!

December 13, 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

November

Nov. 1 Totenfest, Communion Sunday

Daylight Savings ends

10:00 am Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday School during Worship

11:00 am Community Time, Youth Room

Nov. 4

12:00 pm Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge

7:00 pm Choir Practice, Choir Room

Nov. 6

8:30 am Veterans & Friends Breakfast, Alpha Koney

Nov. 7

TBD am Football Game, U of M v MSU

Nov. 8

10:00 am Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday School during Worship

11:00 am Community Time, Youth Room

11:30 am Outreach Ministry Team Mtg., Library

Nov. 10

9:30 am Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney

Nov. 11 Veterans Day

9:30 am Cemetery Board Mtg., Cemetery

12:00 pm Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge

7:00 pm Choir Practice, Choir Room

Nov. 15

10:00 am Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday School during Worship

11:00 am Community Time, Youth Room

Nov. 17

2:00 pm Worship Ministry Mtg., Lounge

3:30 pm Facilities Meeting, Lounge

Nov. 18

12:00 pm Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge

2:30 pm Member Engagement Mtg., Lounge/ZOOM

7:00 pm Choir Practice, Choir Room

Nov. 21

TBD pm Football Game U of M v UCLA

Nov. 22

10:00 am Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday School during Worship

11:00 am Community Time, Youth Room

Nov. 23

2:00 pm BUCC Volunteer Day at Hope Farm Stand

Nov. 25 Office Closes at 1:00 pm

Nov 26 Thanksgiving Day, Office Closed

Nov. 27 Office Closed

Nov. 28

9:00 am Hanging of the Greens

Nov. 29 First Sunday of Advent

10:00 am Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday School during Worship

11:00 am Community Time, Youth Room

Memorials and Gifts Received September 16, - October 15, 2026

CURRENT FUND

Ruth Williman

Judy Barnett

CEMETERY MAINTENANCE FUND

Norm & Helen Grob

Jennifer O'Reilly

Game Day Volunteers Needed

Get in on the excitement while supporting our church! We need **four volunteers for each game** to help make this fundraiser a success. It's a fun way to be part of the game day atmosphere, enjoy fellowship, and raise funds that directly benefit our church.

Ready to get in the game? Scan the QR code to access [SignUpGenius](#) and claim your volunteer spot. Every volunteer helps us score a touchdown for Bethlehem!



11/7 vs MSU: TBD

11/21 vs UCLA: TBD



VETERANS Breakfast

Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

November 6th 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island

4389 Jackson Rd., Ann Arbor

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or via email at:

ziesemerth@gmail.com



Bethlehem Women & Friends

Monthly Breakfast

November 10th at 9:30 am

Alpha Koney Island

4389 Jackson Rd., Ann Arbor

Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or

siirwin46@gmail.com for more info.

Ann Arbor Area CROPWALK 2026

On October 4, nine Bethlehem members joined walkers from local congregations and organizations in support of global and local hunger relief. One quarter of the funds raised will be dedicated to local programs including Peace Neighborhood Center, Avalon Housing, SOS Community Services, Aid in Milan, and Hope Clinic. The rest goes to international hunger relief efforts.

Many thanks to our Pllama team walkers: Pastor Matthew and Travis Hogue-Smith, Pastor Diane White, Jane Schmerberg, Nancy and Amy Nicholson, Eileen Kaprowski, Jim and Katie Rowan.

Thanks as well to the congregation for your generous donations. We raised \$1,785!



November Food Drive

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

Please consider picking up a few extra items as you shop each week to continue to contribute to this effort. Let's fill our barrels!



**Fight hunger where we live
with Food Gatherers, the food
bank & food rescue program
serving Washtenaw County.**



MOST NEEDED ITEMS

Please no glass

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Hearty soups | ✓ Nut butters & jelly |
| ✓ Canned meats | ✓ Kid-friendly snacks |
| ✓ Canned vegetables | ✓ Baby food & formula |
| ✓ Packaged pasta & rice | ✓ Nutritional supplement drinks |
| ✓ Whole-grain cereal & oatmeal | ✓ Personal care items:
- soap & shampoo
- dental hygiene kits
- disposable razors |
| ✓ Baking & cooking supplies | |
| ✓ Condiments | |

Outreach Volunteer Opportunities

In addition to providing financial support, Bethlehem members also support our partner organizations through volunteering. If you would like to get involved, there are several opportunities available.



Peace Neighborhood Center Food Distribution

Fridays 8:30 - 11:30 AM

Peace
Neighborhood
Center

[Peace Food Distribution Sign Up Fall 2026](#)



Food Gatherers

Various shifts are available for individuals to sign up at the Carrot Way warehouse sorting produce, or at the Delonis Center Community Kitchen preparing and serving meals.



In addition to individual signup, Bethlehem will have opportunities for group volunteer days.

[Food Gatherers Individual Sign Up](#)



Hope Clinic, Ypsilanti

Volunteer Opportunities at Hope Clinic

Many opportunities are available including:

- Farm Stand Distribution
- Farm Stand Behind the Scenes Work
- Food Pantry Distribution
- Diaper Pantry Packing, Distribution
- Food Pantry Stocking, Organizing, Cleaning
- Grocery Packing
- Dining Room Host
- Data Entry
- Cleaning
- Yardwork



For individual signup information, please contact Katie Rowan at: rowank55@gmail.com.

In addition to individual volunteer opportunities, Bethlehem will also offer group volunteer days.



Hope Clinic Volunteer Day

Several Bethlehem members have begun volunteering individually at Hope Clinic in Ypsilanti. Hope is a faith based organization providing many services for those in need.

Bethlehem will have a group Volunteer Day at Hope's Farm Stand on Monday, November 23, with two shifts: Produce Sorting 2:00 - 3:45 PM, or Distribution Assistant 3:45 - 6:00 PM. Produce sorting is "behind the scenes" work organizing produce for distribution. Distribution Assistant involves helping clients select their produce. You can sign up here: [Hope Sign Up](#)

Hope Clinic is located at 454 Harriet St., Ypsilanti.



Bethlehem Cemetery

**Direct Financial Support
Tornado Clean-up
\$50,000 goal: update!**

Thank you for reading our October 2026 *Visitor* article, visiting the cemetery, and asking questions about the losses outlined in that article.

We have started to receive donations and know from your questions, other donations will be forthcoming.

We also realize we need to use other communication methods to get our message out to BUCC members and the greater local community. Perhaps we also need other ways to donate to this fund. (Remember to consider designating your Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA before the end of the year, to BUCC and designate the cemetery if you wish.)

Recap from the previous article: The April 15, 2026 tornado started in our cemetery at 2801 Jackson Ave., 48103 and the adjacent Jackson Ave roadway; then traveled to Maple Village a shopping mall and Veterans Memorial Park.

Bethlehem Cemetery Ann Arbor lost so far 28 very large and old trees. Uprooted and downed trees were quickly removed for safety and access reasons.

Please help us by writing a check to Bethlehem Cemetery c/o Bethlehem UCC Church Ann Arbor; 423 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Or donate via credit card at <https://bethlehemcemeteryaa.org/donate/>.

Comments, questions, and suggestions are also welcome at Bethlehemcemeteryaa@gmail.org.

Our sincere thank you and appreciation,

Your Cemetery Board of Directors

Jamie Dylenski, Treasurer; Mary Friend, Vice President; Susan Irwin, member; Shannon O'Reilly, Secretary; Marilyn Pearson, member; Mary Jean Raab, President

As provided by Cemetery Board



Thank you for your generosity. Bethlehem is grateful for your continued support of your time, talent, and treasure. If you would like to consider contributing financially online, please visit bethlehem-ucc.org/giving or use this QR code to find all of the ways to give.



Fiscal Year June 1, 2026 to May 31, 2027			
September 2026	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Target	2026/2027 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$ 99,072	\$124,671	\$374,013
Expenses	\$141,769	\$161,588	\$484,764
Net	(\$ 42,697)	(\$ 36,917)	(\$110,751)

TWISTED TIMES!!!

Once again, a dedicated group of individuals rolled and twisted their way into the annals of history, just as their ancestors did, by making and rolling pretzels to their hearts content. Was Bavaria a little envious of their skill and the meticulous way they applied salt...I should say so. For those of us who were fortunate enough to partake of the warm deliciousness, we are truly grateful if not a size or two bigger. All that can be said is “PROST” and job well done!





In honor of Veteran's Day, November 11, 2026, we would like to acknowledge those Bethlehem members that are still among us, that gave or are giving their time serving our country.

Mike Ehnis	US Army	1963 – 1971
Dave Gilmore	US Army	1970 – 1972
		1989 – 2005 Ret.
Dennis Huibregtse	US Army	1971 – 1976
Ron Karr	US Army	1968 – 1970
Paul Neeb	US Army	1954 – 1956
Jerry Sutfin	US Army	1957 – 1962
Norm Wetzel	US Army	1968 – 1970
Jesse Wilcox	US Army	2008 – 2015
Tom Zieseemer	US Army	1966 – 1969
Jim Aldrich	US Air Force	1963 – 1969
Mike Haab	US Air Force	1965 – 1969
Larry Katz	US Air Force	1957 – 1960
Gary Dresselhouse	US Marines	1954 – 1956
Jacob Pieske	US Marines	
Eugene Alber	US Navy	1949 – 1953
Bob Loukotka	US Navy	1961 – 1966 Ret. 1988
Jim Stadel	US Navy	1969 – 1973
Jennifer Steinaway	Army National Guard	Active Duty



BETHLEHEM

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



(734) 665-6149



423 S Fourth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104



Office Hours
Tue - Fri: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm



info@bethlehem-ucc.org



www.bethlehem-ucc.org

Church Staff

Pastor
665-6149 ext. 215

Rev. Matthew Hogue-Smith
pastor@bethlehem-ucc.org

Associate Pastor
665-6149 ext. 214

Rev. Diane White
pastordiane@bethlehem-ucc.org

Music Director/Organist Naki Kripfgans
musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org

Hand Bell Director Jim Rowan
jrowan@umich.edu

Church Administrator Gwenda Mayes
665-6149 ext. 218 parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org

Administrative Assistant Lisa Reach
665-6149 ext. 210 churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org

Maintenance Bill Husted

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.

Our Core Values

- ♦ Growing spiritually in our faith journey together.
- ♦ Worshipping 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.



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: Jamie Dylenski
Elected Members: Marilyn Pearson & Susan Irwin
Ex officio: Rev. Matthew Hogue-Smith