

# The Visitor

April 2026

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

## From the Pastor



### New Beginnings

***“Thus says the Lord, ...I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”***

*(Isaiah 43:1a, 19)*

Beloved ones, we are about to enter into a season of new beginnings! – The Easter season! After we make our final, dark journey to the cross on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we will celebrate Jesus’ victory over sin and the grave on Easter morning, April 5<sup>th</sup>. Through Jesus, we are reconciled to God and given new life in him. Hallelujah! As you receive communion on Easter Sunday, think deeply about Jesus’ words that he shared with his disciples, “Take and drink. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” We are forgiven! By Grace, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah!

We have other new beginnings on the horizon too! The Search Committee has been working hard to discern the best pastor to serve Bethlehem. Through careful profile study, interviews and more, they are narrowing the field. I imagine that soon and very soon they will be presenting the optimal candidate to the congregation. What an exciting time for Bethlehem! What a wonderful new beginning for you! As Isaiah said, ‘Good things come to those who wait on the Lord.’ Praise God!

In light of both of these marvelous new beginnings, the Stewardship Committee has chosen the theme of *New Beginnings* for this year’s stewardship campaign. Stewardship packets will be mailed out by April 17<sup>th</sup>. We would like to receive pledge cards and Time & Talent sheets by May 4<sup>th</sup>. Stewardship Sunday will be May 3<sup>rd</sup> – when we will celebrate, in worship, the renewal of our shared commitments to the church. As you are able, please bring your pledge cards and Time & Talent sheets to worship that day.

In the meantime, prayerfully consider how you have been blessed by God and by Bethlehem UCC. In gratitude, consider what/how you are able to pledge from your blessings of time, talent and resources. Each blessing shared is important. Each blessing shared contributes to the legacy of the ministry of Bethlehem United Church of Christ. Each blessing shared praises our God from whom all blessings flow!

Let’s see what springs forth with all of the new beginnings the Lord has in store!

In Christ,

*Pastor Dawn*

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## Rotating Shelter 2026

We want to extend a huge thank you to all the volunteers that stepped up to provide sandwiches, snacks and supervision for the Rotating Shelter in the month of



March. Your kindness and generosity of service was sincerely appreciated.

Jessilyn Averill

Steve Bowers

Sue Buday

Lindsay Calka

Judy Coucouvanis

Jan Eadie

Joe Eadie

Mary Friend

Alex Granberg

Mike Haab

John Irwin

Jim Judson

Jacque Katz

Eileen Koprowski

Ele Kotowski

Nan Lefton

Dale Magee

Jane Nicholson

Shannon O'Reilly

Mary Pratt

Lisa Reach

Alex Roopas

Katie Rowan

Jim Rowan

John Schenk

Tim Schenk

Kurt Schmerberg

Diana Slaughter

Jim Stadel

Diane White

Joe Woods

### Memorials and Gifts Received February 16 - March 15, 2026

#### BROADCAST FUND

Ron Jaworowski  
Laura Ann Jaworowski  
Wilma Wahl

#### GENERAL MEMORIAL FUND

Norma Crouch



**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

#### 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

February 2026	Year to Date Actual	YTD Target	25/26 Budget
Offerings and Income	\$280,005	\$326,828	\$435,770
Expenses	\$324,507	\$349,720	\$466,293
Net	(\$44,502)	(\$22,892)	(\$30,523)

# APRIL 2026

## April 1

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

## April 2 Maundy Thursday

- Ecumenical Service at First Congregational Church, 7:00 pm

## April 3 Good Friday, Office Closes at Noon.

- Veterans & Friends Breakfast, Alpha Koney 8:30 am
- Ecumenical Service at King of Kings w/Shalom Community Church and Bethlehem UCC, 7:00 pm

## April 5 Easter Sunday

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

## April 6 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

## April 8

- Cemetery Board Meeting, Cemetery 9:30 am
- Bethlehem Community Crafters, Lounge 12:00 pm
- Member Engagement Mtg., Lounge/ZOOM 3:00 pm
- Choir Practice, Choir Room 7:00 pm

## April 12

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

## April 13 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

## April 14

- Ladies Breakfast, Alpha Koney 9:30 am

## April 15

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

## April 19

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

## April 20 Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

## April 21

- Facilities Meeting, Lounge 3:30 pm

## April 22-

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

## April 23

- Executive Committee Meeting, via ZOOM

## April 26

- Worship, Sanctuary, 10:00 am
- Sunday School during Worship
- Community Time, Youth Room 11:00 am
- Outreach Ministry Meeting with speaker from Evangelical Homes of Michigan with lunch, Youth Room, 11:30 am

## April 27- Office Closed

- Handbell Practice, Choir Room 11:00 am

## April 29

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

*April Showers bring May Flowers*



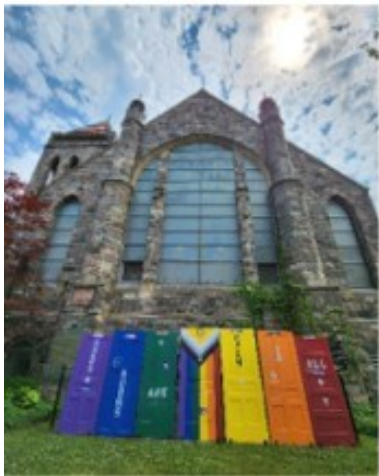
## Concert Benefits Michigan

### Immigrant Rights Center

Thank you to Naki Kripfgans and Kristina Zlatareva, and guest Danielle Belen for a fabulous concert performed in our sanctuary on March 15 and sponsored by our Outreach team. Donations totaled \$990 to support the services provided by the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center. Additional contributions were directly submitted to MIRC via QR code. Thanks also to Gail Jennings, Eileen Kaprowski, Nan Lefton, Katie Rowan, Jane Schmerberg, and Diane White for providing refreshments for the reception following the concert.

## Evangelical Homes of Michigan Presentation and Luncheon

The President and CEO of Evangelical Homes of Michigan, Kari Rennie, will join us on April 26, 2026 at 11:30 am in the Youth Room for an informational presentation and luncheon. EHM provides a host of services and resources for senior living and healthcare and this event is meant to give increased awareness of what is available to us. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to the church office by April 21, 2026 if you will attend.



## **Bethlehem United Church of Christ**

**423 S. Fourth Avenue**

**Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104**

**(734) 665-6149**

March 13, 2026

Dear Members,

On Thursday, March 12, a person used his car to breach security at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield. Fortunately, only the lone attacker was killed. The security agents at the building were able to stop this person before he could hurt others. There is a childcare center and school in that building and both were active at the time of this attack. Thankfully, no children were harmed.

Last fall, there was another similar attack by an individual on a church community in Grand Blanc. Unfortunately, we are seeing these types of attacks on faith communities more frequently in our country, and close to home in Michigan.

How prepared are we at Bethlehem, if such a horrible event were to visit our doorsteps? That was the question that Pastor Dawn had last fall following the Grand Blanc attack. At that time, she convened a small committee to begin an assessment of and develop plans for enhancement of our preparedness. The committee was composed of Facilities Chair Steve Darr, Pastor Dawn and me (Ron Dechert). We have added our Church Administrator Gwenda Mayes to our committee.

This committee has been working behind the scenes to get things started. I have met twice with a member of First Methodist who is part of their safety/security committee to compare notes. I was informed at the first meeting that First Presbyterian organized a meeting of downtown churches on the topic of "Building Sacred Spaces" intended to create an organized coalition to enhance security for all faith communities in downtown Ann Arbor. Bethlehem was not notified of this effort until after the first meeting. The second meeting is scheduled for next Thursday (3/19) and I will be attending to represent Bethlehem.

Our committee has also conducted a self-assessment of safety and security at Bethlehem, which we have completed and submitted to Leadership Council for their awareness and support. As part of this self-assessment, we (committee) were able to rate each identified safety item, from low cost/high potential impact up to high cost/low potential impact. That provided a rubric to allow prioritization of the action items. We have already started to implement some of the low cost/high potential impact items. One item you are aware of was the locking of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ave doors after service begins. This redirects people arriving after the start of the service to a single entrance that can be monitored remotely on individual cellphones or in the church office. It also prevents intruders from easy access to the sanctuary during service.

Many other steps need to be taken to enhance (“harden”) the security of our building and safety of our members and visitors. Before we take any step, we ask ourselves, “how will this impact our welcoming of people seeking to worship together?” We must carefully balance welcome and hospitality with safety and security.

Over the coming weeks and months, our committee will be keeping you aware of the actions being taken and the rationale for choosing those actions. We cannot do this alone. We will require support and engagement of Ann Arbor first responders, our staff, our renters, our ministry teams and leaders, and you...the members of Bethlehem. Some actions, if we choose to enact, may require funds and fundraising.

We wanted to get this information out to you so you are aware that the safety and security of our staff, visitors, friends, and members are very important and work is being done to develop policies and procedures so we all can worship in peace.

If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions please reach out to any of the members of this committee.

God bless you all,

Ron Dechert - Vice President

## 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.**

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.

## 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.

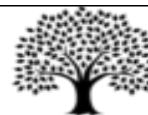
You can add your name to be a

[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](mailto: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.



REMEMBERING OUR  
**Homebound**

## 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

April 14th at 9:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.  
Contact Susan Irwin at 734-255-5661 or [sirwin46@gmail.com](mailto:sirwin46@gmail.com) for more info.

## Bethlehem Veterans & Friends

### Monthly Breakfast

April 3rd at 8:30 am

Alpha Koney Island, 4389 Jackson Rd.

Questions? Contact Tom Ziesemer

734-476-7515 or via email at: [ziesemerth@gmail.com](mailto:ziesemerth@gmail.com)



VETERANS  
*Breakfast*

## 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](mailto:info@bethlehem-ucc.org)

# Easter

## WORD SEARCH



Find the hidden Easter-related words. The words can be horizontal, vertical and diagonal. The letters that are left over, form a hidden message!

basket	T	E	A	S	Y	T	B	E	R	C	S	I	S	T	Y
bloom	R	H	E	O	T	N	O	N	L	R	N	T	Y	S	L
bonnet	A	E	T	I	I	M	N	E	W	O	A	N	N	S	I
+ bumblebees	D	H	T	E	B	N	N	U	I	C	E	U	C	W	M
bunny	I	D	T	S	B	I	E	S	B	U	B	H	E	O	A
celebrations	T	E	B	S	A	A	T	F	E	S	Y	G	L	L	F
crocus	I	C	M	U	R	E	T	O	S	P	L	G	E	L	D
daffodils	O	O	O	U	M	T	Y	O	A	T	L	E	B	A	A
decorate	N	R	O	L	L	B	R	P	E	Y	E	R	R	M	F
duckling	S	A	L	O	Y	C	L	K	P	U	J	E	A	H	F
Easter egg hunt	R	T	B	L	T	E	S	E	G	A	G	T	T	S	O
family	S	E	I	O	I	A	N	O	B	N	H	S	I	R	D
happy Easter	E	L	H	B	B	B	M	A	L	E	A	A	O	A	I
hot cross buns	G	N	I	L	K	C	U	D	S	K	E	E	N	M	L
jelly beans	E	P	A	L	M	S	U	N	D	A	Y	S	S	T	S
lamb															
lily															
marshmallows															
Palm Sunday															
rabbit															
traditions															

HIDDEN MESSAGE: \_\_\_\_\_





**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.

<b>Rev. Dawn Christenson</b>	<b>Interim Pastor</b>
revdawnchristenson@gmail.com	
<b>Rev. Diane White</b>	<b>Associate Pastor</b>
pastordiane@bethlehem-ucc.org	
<b>Naki Kripfgans</b>	<b>Music Director/Organist</b>
musicdirector@bethlehem-ucc.org	
<b>Gwenda Mayes</b>	<b>Church Administrator</b>
parishadministrator@bethlehem-ucc.org	
<b>Jim Rowan</b>	<b>Hand Bell Director</b>
jrowan@umich.edu	
<b>Lisa Reach</b>	<b>Administrative Assistant</b>
churchoffice@bethlehem-ucc.org	
<b>Bill Husted</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>
<b>Dan Blakeney</b>	<b>Video Director</b>

### 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