



The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past - Faith in Our Future

June 2026



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
JUNE 28-30 * 5:15-7:30 PM

Pastor's Perspective



Do you remember the excitement of the last day of school? This time of year, I can close my eyes and almost feel that old thrill of the weightlessness of the day school lets out. Summer stretched before us, and it seemed we had all the time in the world before it would be time to shop for pencils and glue and crayons again.

Time moves faster as we grow up, and we know that school will be back in session before we know it. Families try to cram in as much fun as possible into the precious few weeks of the precious few summers we get with our children under our roofs. Other families cherish the “gaps” in their college kids’ summer schedules that make a little room for time with Mom and Dad. And some relive the thrill of summer as they babysit grandkids or shuttle them between camp and home.

This summer, as you try to fit in all the fun you have been waiting for all school year long, please make plans for some “quality time” with your church family. I know it’s easy to “check out” of everything (including church) for the summer. But we are still here every week, gathering for worship. We still read the Scriptures, sing the hymns, and think on the things of God. We still pray together and encourage and uphold one another. And you still need these things in your life—even when you’re in “break mode”.

What if, instead of thinking of summer as a break from church (“we’ll get back on a schedule when Sunday School starts again. . .”), you made worship a **part** of how your family makes the most of the time together this summer? Children who are out of every other routine benefit from seeing that their church family is here year-round: worshipping, supporting one another, and serving the needs around us as we’re able. What if, instead of saying, “I won’t

be there, because I've got the grandkids in town," you brought them along to church, so they can see the role it plays in your life?

I am glad you are part of our church family. You are missed when you are not here. You are wanted and needed—all year round!



Pastor Doug will be on vacation beginning May 25 and will be back in the office on June 8. Pastor Emily will be on vacation beginning June 4 and be back for Sunday worship on June 14.

So, who's leading worship? See below!

May 30*-31: Pastor Emily

June 6: Haiden Hart

June 7*: Rev. Stephanie Weiner

*Communion service

DAVID

Young and young at heart will learn the story of David through crafts, games, and songs. Our 3-day event will culminate in a private screening of the film David, a beautifully animated, faith-filled retelling of one of the most beloved stories in Scripture. From his humble beginnings as a shepherd to his courage in standing against the giant Goliath, David brings to life the journey of a young man whose trust in God shaped his destiny.

PARTICIPATE

Children and Youth in Kindergarten through High School are invited to sign up. Children from our preschool class are welcome to attend with an adult. (Middle and High School students will be given leadership roles.)

VOLUNTEER

- VBS Work Day June 16th at 8:30 am (Fellowship Hall)
- Volunteers needed each night of VBS

SIGN UP AND VOLUNTEER LINK

VBS 2026
JUNE 28-30
5:15-7:30



PENNYRILE FOREST STATE PARK

CHURCH RETREAT



REGISTRATION OPEN NOW—JUNE 30TH SPACE LIMITED

JULY 31—AUGUST 2

Cottage and lodge rooms are available for reservation. Lodge rooms are offered in either two queen beds or one king bed configuration and are priced at \$150 per night, which includes breakfast.

One- and two-bedroom cottages are also available starting at \$200 per night. These cottages are located across the lake from the main lodge. Breakfast is included; however, please note that the cottages are a short drive or a longer walk from the main lodge, where all group activities and meal services will take place.

Festivities will begin Friday evening and conclude Sunday morning with an outdoor worship service.

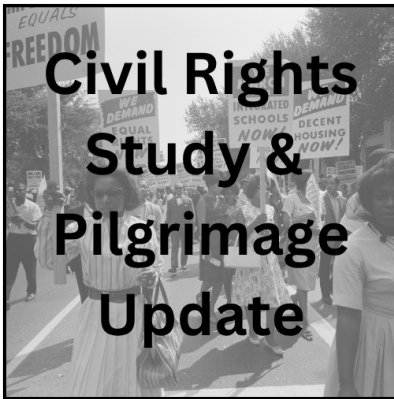
To reserve your spot, please call 270-797-3421 and
reference group code 2709

Contact Margaret Eberhart for further info. 859-576-1442

CONFIRMATION CLASS

2027

Our Confirmation class of 2027 will begin in August! I look forward to welcoming sixth and seventh graders into this special year of study. Please reach out to Pastor Emily if you have a student who plans to participate.



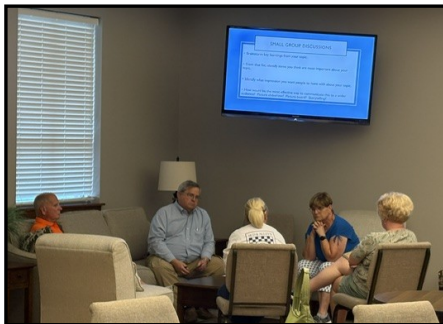
Our Civil Rights Class and Pilgrimage group met again this month to discuss next steps including sharing our experiences with the congregations in the Evansville Tri-State Association. We will be working with Troy in the weeks ahead to create a video that can be shared easily, as well as making plans to have some of our members travel to churches to share in person about our

experiences. We are also doing some research about local groups that are already doing important work to mitigate the on-going ramifications of racial

injustice in our nation's

history. Join us in

praying for clarity about where we might offer ourselves as willing servants and allies for change. In other words, **STAY TUNED!**





UPDATES FROM OUTREACH



June 6 and 7

This month's canned fruit collection for the Tri-State Food Bank will be June 6 and 7. You may bring cans (with pull-tabs, if possible) to either the Saturday or Sunday worship service. 83 items were donated in May. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Tri-State Food Bank.

Strengthen the Church Offering



The Strengthen the Church offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.**

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Give [here](#).

Tuesday Evening Bible Study

Join the evening Bible study at 6:30 pm anytime on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. See the schedule below listing the dates and scriptures covered. Please contact Pastor Doug with any questions.

June 9	*Exodus 19:2-8a Romans 5:1-8 Matthew 9:35-10:8	July 7	Isaiah 55:10-13 Romans 8:1-11 Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
June 23	Jeremiah 28:5-9 Romans 6:12-23 Matthew 10:40-42	July 21	1 Kings 3:5-12 Romans 8:26-39 Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

*Denotes scripture covered by Pastor Emily for the upcoming weekend.

Altar Flowers



Donate Sunday morning altar flowers to celebrate a special occasion or remember a loved one. Prices are \$40 for two vases and/or \$35 for one centerpiece. To view available dates and sign up, see our website bethlehemucc.org. Paper forms are always available in the vestibule (office entrance open 24/7), church office hallway, Welcoming Area, children and youth entrance, and narthex.

Upcoming available dates: June 7 & July 5, 12, 19, 25

If you have any altar flower questions, please contact Carol Kolb at carolrkolb@yahoo.com.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Welcome to summer (almost...)! During the summer, it is easy to “fall off” at church. Please stay tuned in to the STARs and weekly emails to see how you can stay involved. At the May Church Council meeting, we decided to add the library floor to the Eosin fellowship hall flooring project. This will update that space while eliminating another flooring transition. As always, please feel free to [email me](#) with any issues that arise!

Blessings to you all,
Amy Spurling

Financial Recap

April General Account

	<u>2026</u>	<u>2025</u>
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 183,889.88	\$ 178,049.38
Monthly Pledge Deposits	30,549.49	25,565.08
Monthly Other Deposits	1,478.29	2,045.88
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(62,835.63)	(64,374.45)
Monthly Other Disbursements	3,521.62	(690.41)
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 156,603.65</u>	<u>\$ 140,595.48</u>

YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 168,584.96	\$ 170,535.44
Pledge Deposits	153,042.71	150,857.39
Other Deposits	11,010.90	6,409.55
Operating Disbursements	(180,627.55)	(187,804.92)
Other Disbursements	4,592.63	598.02
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 156,603.65</u>	<u>\$ 140,595.48</u>



Celebrating Faithful Giving

One of the many ways we are blessed here at Bethlehem is through financial gifts from our forebears that continue to strengthen and facilitate our ministries. If you've served on the Church Council, Finance Team, Endowment Team, Memorial Team, Outreach Team, Cemetery Board or the Property Team, you may have heard terms like "Schmitt Trust" or "Voigt Trust" or "Heilmann Money." Additionally, unnamed gifts have been made through the years to establish our Endowment Fund and our Cemetery Perpetual Fund.

These gifts were given in faith by saints who have gone on before us. They gave, believing that the church still has work to do—work that outlasts any one of us. And we are living proof that they were right—we do, indeed, still have work to do!

Did you know that gifts like these continue to be given today? Recently, two of our beloved Bethlehem members have left gifts with clear intention for the future of our church. Ken Widick left money specifically to benefit the needs of the church office, and some of that money has already been used to update equipment for our staff.

More recently, Marvin Sunderman left two large gifts to Bethlehem—one for our Endowment funds and one for our Cemetery funds. We will steward these gifts to continue the work of Bethlehem UCC far into the future.

We remember and celebrate these men (and their wives who preceded them in death) for their forward-thinking, their generosity, their faith, and their commitment to the work of the church in every age. May we remember that these investments are also a vote of confidence in us—those who continue to labor on this side of the grave. These gifts demonstrate a belief that we will continue the work Christ has called us to—work our forebears also did—until the day faith is in sight for all of us.

Jim Hitch is
100
Join us to celebrate!
June 27, 2026 2:00 - 4:00 PM
The Villas at Theater Commons
4500 Theater Drive, Evansville
Please - no gifts - your presence is your present!

Red, White, and Blueberry Brunch

Everyone is invited to celebrate our nation's independence at the annual Red, White, and Blueberry Brunch on **Sunday, July 5, at 9:00 am!** Please join us in the Welcoming Area for a time of food, fellowship, and song.

There will be breakfast casseroles, muffins, kuchens, and fruit to eat, along with juice, coffee, and milk to drink. If you have a patriotic food specialty that you would like to contribute, please bring it that morning. Please contact Debbie Havens at dkhavens49@gmail.com with questions. Sponsored and prepared by the WEB group, this brunch is free to everyone.

See you there!!

Bosse Teacher Leigh Gray Visit

For last summer's Vacation Bible School's Service Project, we collected items and money for Bosse's Constructed Creations, a class at Bosse High School where students learn entrepreneurial skills through repurposing construction projects.

In May, we welcomed teacher Leigh Gray to speak during the Sunday School hour about her personal testimony and how the feeding of the 5,000 was the catalyst in her developing the class (now five classes) at the high school.



To learn more about the class and how to support or purchase students' items, follow the class' [Facebook group](#).



Rev. Dr. Monica Ouellette Visit

It was great to have Rev. Dr. Monica Ouellette, Associate Conference Minister, visit with us as part of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference's "Covenant Tours". Monica met with members of the Church Council, spoke at both worship services, and shared a lovely gift with our church. She has documented her experience with pictures in a [blogpost](#).

We celebrate that Bethlehem is not an "island", but is connected through covenant with congregations locally and throughout the conference.

Annual Summer Social

- **BBQ Dinner**
- **Ice Cream & Desserts**
- **Silent Auction**
- **Cruise In**



Mark your calendar now (July 12, 4:00 - 7:00 pm) for the annual Bethlehem Barbecue Dinner, Ice Cream Social, and Cruise In. The Summer Social church-wide event raises thousands of dollars each year for the benefit of Evansville Habitat for Humanity.

The scrumptious adult meal includes barbecue pork and choice of two sides: baked beans, coleslaw, pasta salad, chips, drink and dessert. Kid's meal includes hot dog, choice of side, chips, drink, and dessert. Dessert choices are homemade cookies, cakes, pies, and, of course, delicious homemade ice cream. The price of a dinner this year will be \$12 in advance (\$15 at the door) and \$6 for kids. On June 28 and July 5 following worship, advance tickets will be available for purchase in the Welcoming Area. Cash or check accepted. Carryout meals will be available.

Be sure to bid generously for the Silent Auction items! Auction closes at 6:45 pm.

Social Ice Cream and Dessert Makers

Sunday, July 12

Mark your calendar now for the annual Bethlehem Barbecue Dinner and Ice Cream Social! The Summer Social church-wide event raises thousands of dollars every year for the benefit of Habitat for Humanity.

We need ice cream and dessert makers. If you can bring homemade ice cream or baked goods, please click [HERE](#), or you can use this form and place it in the offering plate, or bring it to the church office. Paper copies are also available at church entrances. Thank you!

I would like to donate the following items for the Ice Cream Social:

_____ Homemade Ice Cream (flavors other than vanilla are especially popular)

_____ Cake

_____ Cupcakes

_____ Pie

_____ Cookies

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Dear Friends at Bethlehem United Church of Christ,



On behalf of everyone at Eden Theological Seminary, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your support of the seminary. Your financial contribution to the Annual Fund of \$3,299 is incredibly meaningful. It allows us to continue Eden's mission as called to strengthen the life of the church by educating leaders with theological imagination and faithful resilience to join God's loving and liberating work in the world.

Thanks to your generosity, we are engaging people in a seminary education to meet the moment. Our Network Model for Theological Education facilitates collaboration among seminaries, colleges and denominations to equip and support leaders wherever they are in their journey. A new Momentum for Ministry Initiative coordinates learning among congregations, seminaries, students, and alumni to thrive in the current and future digital age.

We are grateful that you belong to this community of supporters and are eager to keep you updated on the impact of your gift.

Once again, thank you for your kindness and support. Should you have any questions or wish to learn more about our programs, please do not hesitate to reach out at mblaufuss@eden.edu.

In gratitude,

Rev. Dr. Mary Schaller Blaufuss
Vice President for Advancement

Dear Bethlehem Family,



Thank you so much for the cards, emails, and phone calls during my medical leave. This season of uncertainty, surgery, and recovery was stressful and frightening, and your kindness meant more to me than I can fully express. Every note, every call, and every message reminded me that I was not walking through it alone. You do not always realize just how much those simple acts of care matter until you are the one on the receiving end, and I will always be grateful for the love and encouragement you shared with me. I especially want to thank Pastors Emily and Doug, along with the Council, for their support during such a difficult time. I am also deeply thankful to Kristen for keeping the office running so smoothly and for covering for me when I could not be there. With God's grace and your support, I am grateful to be back in the office and among you once again.

Most sincerely,

Patty Oglesby

Dear Bethlehem UCC,

On behalf of the Evansville Psychiatric Children's Center, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for the wonderful Easter baskets you created for each of our children. Your generosity and thoughtfulness brought so much joy to them this season.

The children were thrilled with the art supplies, sunglasses, stuffed animals, fidgets, bubbles, and candy. Watching their excitement as they opened their

continued

baskets was truly special. Your kindness helped make each child feel valued, supported, and remembered.

Thank you for making such a meaningful impact on the children we serve. Your continued support of our community is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Choisser
Community Services Director



We rejoice with church family members who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this month. A full list of birthdays and anniversaries can found on our website at bethlehem/estar or by contacting the church office (867-2497) for a printed list.





BETHLEHEM
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
6400 Oak Hill Road
Evansville, IN 47725

Please contact the church office if you are aware of any address changes.

(812) 867-2497 (Office)

email: church@bethlehemucc.org

website: bethlehemucc.org

Follow us on Facebook,
Instagram, and Twitter

Office Hours

Monday 12:00 - 3:00 PM

**Tuesday - Thursday
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

***Striving to welcome all who seek God; to grow in faith;
and to love neighbor as self through action.***