



The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past – Faith in Our Future

November 2026

Psalm 107

**O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.**

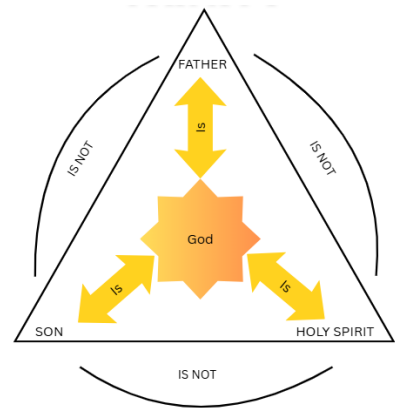


Pastor's Perspective



In Confirmation, we are talking about God. Which probably seems obvious, and perhaps even simple, but Christianity's explanation of who God is... is complicated. First, we must take for granted that God is mystery. We're not going to get this figured out! And our language is limited, so how we speak about God is likely to trip us up. Still, Christians have developed ways for talking about God.

Christians talk about God in terms of the Trinity. God is one God, but in three persons. There is both unity and diversity in the Godhead. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit and so on, but there is only one God. There is no hierarchy among the persons of the Trinity. Though we sometimes slip into the heresy of talking as if the Father were somehow the "boss", the Godhead is marked by mutuality, not rank.



Another important thing to know about God is that God is eternal. In fact, God is outside of time altogether. We use language of time, because it's what we know, but God is absolutely free, which means God is outside the bounds of time.

Time comes into play especially when we talk about the second person of the Trinity, the Son. The Son comes to us in the flesh at the Incarnation. Jesus is the Son forever. The Incarnation does not sever at Jesus' death nor

does it end after Jesus ascends into heaven. To this day, Jesus sits at the right hand of God and is God the Son.

But before Jesus was born, the Son existed. The Son existed at creation, before creation, and exists outside of time, just like the rest of the Godhead. But Jesus did not exist until his conception in Mary's womb. I like to draw this diagram to help the Confirmands with this difficult subject:



The Son's existence is like a line. The Son exists forever in both directions.



Jesus' existence is like a ray. The Son becomes Incarnate at a fixed moment in history, and Jesus (as the Son) lives forever into the future (though Jesus is dead between the crucifixion and the resurrection).

The diagram also has its limitations. It would be more accurate to fuse the ray *onto* the line, but then it would all be hard to see! The point is, the Incarnation is God in human flesh, and that incarnation is never undone. Jesus is both fully God and fully human. 100% God and 100% human still equals 100% Jesus. There is no parsing out a "divine" or "human" part of Jesus. He is both/and always.

If your mind is spinning a bit, that's probably about right. Divine mystery isn't meant to be mastered. But hopefully this "refresher" helps clarify a bit about Christian belief and gives you a taste for some of what our kids are studying.



Sunday School Children's Program Update

Our Sunday School children have been doing a deep dive into the Old Testament and are developing an impressive knowledge of some of the Bible's foundational stories. Since the start of the school year, we have explored the Creation of the World, Adam and Eve and the Fall, Noah and the Ark, the Tower of Babel, God's call of Abraham and his faithful journey to follow God's instructions, and the births of Ishmael and Isaac.

The children have been engaged in thoughtful discussions, activities, and lessons that help them understand not only the events of these stories but also God's ongoing plan for His people.

On November 1st, we will take a break from new material for a fun review and craft day (planned with some post-Halloween, sugar-filled energy in mind!). This will give the children an opportunity to revisit what they have learned and reinforce these important biblical lessons.

Following our review day, we will continue our journey through the Old Testament by learning about Jacob, Joseph, and the call of Moses. As we move through these stories, the children will continue to discover how God's promises unfold throughout Scripture and how each lesson ultimately points us toward Jesus.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement as we help our children grow in their knowledge of God's Word and His amazing plan of salvation. We are excited to see their faith and understanding continue to grow each week!

Sunday School Youth Update

Our youth continue to meet each Sunday in the youth room with Mr. Mike and Mrs. Niki to discuss questions about what it means to live as a Christian and grow in faith. Through open conversation, Bible study, and fellowship, they are exploring how God's Word applies to their daily lives and learning what it means to follow Christ in today's world.

I am so excited to see a strong group gathering each week! It has been encouraging to watch these young people engage in meaningful discussions and support one another in their faith journeys. I am proud of these teens and their families for making Sunday School a priority and investing in their spiritual growth.



November 22: The youth will serve dinner at UCS and then head to Turoni's for their annual Friendsgiving Dinner.

Please RSVP to Mrs. Margaret at margaret@bethlehemucc.org so we can make plans accordingly.

Thank you for supporting our youth ministry and helping create opportunities for our teens to grow in faith, serve others, and build lasting friendships. We look forward to a wonderful season together!



Time Change

This Saturday evening, October 31, be sure to set your clocks back an hour and join us in the morning for Sunday School at 9:00 am!



Year-end STAR Details

Before we know it, the the final newsletter of 2026 will be here! Please plan accordingly with any announcements or articles, as the next issue will cover information for December 2026 and January 2027. Articles are due Monday, November 16. Please send your information to publishing@bethlehemucc.org. The next STAR newsletter in the new year will be February 2027.

2026 Annual Report News

This year we welcome Haiden Hart (our Saturday night worship leader) to the 'editorial staff' of the Annual Report. Haiden will be collating the information that will become this year's Annual Report.

If you are a committee head or team leader of a specific group, we need you to do the following:

1. Determine the leadership for next year in your committee.
2. Begin writing your report that summarizes the activities of your specific group for the 2026 year. ***Remember that these reports represent the life of Bethlehem Church.***
3. Watch for more information from Haiden about submission deadlines.

Leaders, be looking for emailed instructions on how to submit your reports. **The final report deadline will be Friday, December 18.**



Advent is coming early this year!

We will be breaking with the lectionary for Advent on Sunday mornings this year. We will be looking at the birth announcements of John the Baptist and Jesus, and then the birth of both. To do this, we're going to need to get started early! We will begin with Luke 1.15-25 on November 15.



Staff Gifts

Dear Bethlehem Members and Friends,

Every year at Bethlehem, we follow a wonderful tradition of remembering our pastors and staff at Christmas time. Rather than each of us buying a small remembrance for them, we pool our resources for a more substantial gift.

If you would like to participate, you can give online by clicking the 'Online Giving' icon on our website - please select **"Staff Christmas Gifts"**. Also, you can get donations directly to me using Venmo @Amy-Spurling-1; leaving it in my mailbox (Church Council President, next to the elevator), or handing it to me directly. Just put it in an envelope marked "Staff Christmas Gifts".

I'll take contributions until Sunday, December 20th.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at amyspurl@gmail.com.

Combining our funds has enabled us to present our pastors and staff with some nice gifts at Christmas time. We hope you will join us in thanking them for another year of dedicated service to Bethlehem UCC.

Blessings,
Amy Spurling
Church Council President



Bucket Blitz



PICNIC IN THE Pavilion





Ponderings from the Green Team

Cooler Temps, Fall Clothing

While contemplating my fall wardrobe, I learned that, “Globally, the equivalent of **one garbage truck** of used clothing and textiles is sent to a landfill or burned **every second**. This equals roughly 31.5 million garbage trucks of textile waste thrown away every single year, driven by an estimated **92 million tons** of global textile waste annually.” Earth.org

How could that possibly be? According to earthday.org/campaign/sustainable-fashion:

- The fashion industry produces 100 billion garments a year and 87% (40 million tons) end up in a landfill where they smolder and pollute the air or an incinerator.
- Only 1% of all discarded clothing is actually recycled.
- The average person today buys 60 percent more items of clothing than they did 15 years ago, but keep them for only half as long. The average garment may be worn as few as ten times before disposal.
- The apparel industry is responsible for 4% of greenhouse gas emissions – the same as the countries of Germany, France and the U.K. combined.

I think that sweater is good for another season!

Stephanie Weiner, for the Green Team

Can you help?

We are looking for a list of folks we can call on to serve as (paid) back-up for our janitorial staff. If you can cover occasionally when one of our custodians is out, please reach out to Amy Spurling at amyspurl@gmail.com, 812-453-5895, or let the office know.



Dear Bethlehem Congregation,

Wow, it's November already! It's really amazing how quickly the days go by! This month in council we discussed many important things happening around our church! By the time you read this, the book and bake sale will be completed and we will be cruising along toward Advent.

Soon you will receive a mailing asking for your attendance at the congregational meeting November 15 to approve the budget for 2027; please make plans to join us!

Also stay tuned as we get ready to have some tree work done. Please watch the weekly emails and the church calendar to participate in all of the opportunities around our busy campus. Please reach out to me for any questions or concerns at amyspurl@gmail.com.

Blessings,
Amy Spurling

The Indiana-Kentucky Conference

RISE PASTORAL INITIATIVE

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED BECOMING A PASTOR?

Realize your dream through various alternative paths to ministry.
Discovery Day is an ongoing ZOOM opportunity for you to discuss ministry possibilities in the IKC. You can sign up for a Discovery Day by scanning the QR Code.
We look forward to talking with you!



WHAT IS THE RISE PASTORAL INITIATIVE?

CALLING AND BECOMING PASTORAL LEADERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

R ROOTED IN COVENANT
I IDENTIFY GIFTS
S SHAPE FOR LEADERSHIP
E EMPOWER TO SERVE



Finance Committee Update

We have had a successful Stewardship Campaign! We currently have pledge dollars that total last year's amount. It also appears we have a few pledge cards yet to be received. Thank you.

We would be remiss to not thank Mike Head, who spearheaded our Stewardship Campaign. Thank you, Mike!

At the end of September 2026, we are on pace to meet our expense budget for 2026. Thank you, thank you, thank you. As we head into the season of Advent, keep up the good work of financially supporting our ministries here at Bethlehem. It makes a difference!

Financial Recap

September General Account

	2026	2025
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 186,327.02	\$ 121,472.99
Monthly Pledge Deposits	24,692.49	42,419.34
Monthly Other Deposits	10,751.12	1,455.91
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(38,523.80)	(38,618.72)
Monthly Other Disbursements	(16,324.40)	121.06
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 166,922.43</u>	<u>\$ 126,850.58</u>

YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 168,584.96	\$ 170,535.44
Pledge Deposits	353,985.45	314,313.25
Other Deposits	26,997.60	23,364.42
Operating Disbursements	(383,779.20)	(388,270.95)
Other Disbursements	1,133.62	6,908.42
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 166,922.43</u>	<u>\$ 126,850.58</u>

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.

Nov. 3 Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25
I Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

Nov. 17 Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46

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 or Emily's Edition. 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: November 15, 22, 29

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



Apple Pies



Once again the Eosin Sunday School Class will be selling Dutch Apple Crumb Pies. These delicious pies will be available for only \$12.00, just in time for your Thanksgiving gatherings. We are taking PREPAID orders at this time. If you want to be assured of getting your Thanksgiving pies, complete the form at the bottom of this page and put it in the Eosin mailbox, the church office vestibule mailbox, or leave it in the office. Please make your checks out to Eosin. You may pick up freshly made pies on Thursday, November 12, in the church kitchen between 2:00 and 5:30 P.M. or get them frozen on Sunday, November 15. We will be selling any extra pies on these dates. We will only save pies that have been prepaid.

Only 140 of the fabulous homemade pies, filled with fresh apples, will be prepared. All you need to do is purchase a pie (or several), take home, and bake. Instructions for baking are included on the label.

The profits from this project will be used to help fund Bethlehem's Missions. **This is a win/win project – help our church's missions and impress your holiday guests with homemade pies!**

EOSIN APPLE PIE SALE

Number of Pies _____ @ \$12.00 each total cost _____

Name _____ phone number _____

Email address _____

Remember to pick up your fresh pies on Thursday, November 12, between 2:00 and 5:30 PM.

Checks should be made out to Eosin.

Our 2027 Confirmands and Mentors



Lilly Allen, Meredith Perry,
Jordyn Turner

Mentors: Debbie Kuebler and
Tracey Stevens (not pictured)

Ben Oglesby, Gabe Hirsch,
Teddy Thewes

Mentors: Stephen Risinger and
Rich Steedman



Our 2027 Confirmands and Mentors



Joel Harper, Jeremy Dix,
Mason Turner, Paisley Damm

Mentors: Jordan and Brooke French



Directory Update



New Address:

Jerry and Charlotte Brandenberger
3701 Cobblefield Drive
Evansville, IN 47711

Haiden Hart
2349 Palladio Ave.
Owensboro, KY. 42301

Cell phone:
Kaye Platts
(812) 204-3524



UPDATES FROM OUTREACH

A Big Bucket Blitz Thank-You!

Thank you to all who participated in the 2026 Bucket Blitz! On October 4, 40 five-gallon buckets were filled during the Sunday School hour with supplies needed for cleaning up after natural disasters. A special thank-you to Andrea and Wayne Gander for transporting Bethlehem's buckets, plus donations of other kits and buckets brought to Bethlehem from churches as far away as Louisville, KY, to Indianapolis, for subsequent distribution by Church World Service.

Canned Fruit Collection in November

The next collection of canned fruit will be the weekend of November 14 and 15. In October, 161 items were collected and delivered to the Tri-State Food Bank. Please bring cans of fruit, with pull-tabs if possible, and place them around the altar. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Cake Mixes for the Rescue Mission

Again this year, Bethlehem will collect cake mixes (any flavor) for the Evansville Rescue Mission, to be used in their annual Thanksgiving basket giveaway. Beginning the weekend of October 31 and November 1 and continuing through Sunday, November 15, you may place your donations in the green labeled boxes found in the Welcoming Area and the vestibule by the church office. Thank you for helping the Rescue Mission with their 105th Gobbler Gathering!

Christmas for Caze

The Outreach Team will again coordinate this project to make Christmas a little merrier for some Caze Elementary School students. Check the December/January STAR and upcoming Emily's Editions for more details.

Outreach Giving for 2026

Each year, the Outreach Committee is entrusted with funds from the church budget to distribute to local entities. For the past several years, we have also been privileged to distribute a portion of the Voigt Trust annual distribution. Following is a listing of gifts designated by the Outreach Committee in 2026:

EVSC Foundation - classroom book sets for Vogel School - \$1,400.00
Immigrant Welcome and Resource Center of Evansville - \$2,165.00
United Church of Christ - earthquake relief in Venezuela - \$1,000.00
SWIRCA (for Meals on Wheels) - \$1,000.00
Lampion Center (mental health services) - \$1,000.00
Servants at Work (SAWS) - builds wooden ramps for those with mobility issues - \$1,500.00
Parenting Time Center (safe environment for supervised visitations, and parenting classes) - \$1,000.00
Goodwill Excel Center - helps adults earn their high-school diplomas - \$1,000.00
Aurora - dedicated to ending homelessness - \$500.00
United Caring Services - \$500.00
United Church of Christ - flood relief in Nepal - \$1,500.00
Immanuel United Church of Christ in Highland, IN - flood relief - \$1,000.00
Trinity United Church of Christ in Gary, IN - flood relief - \$1,000.00
Hadi Shrine (for transporting children to Shriners' Hospitals) - \$1,000.00



Cemetery Plots/Niches Price Increases

Bethlehem is fortunate to be able to offer a final resting place for members and non-members alike. We offer both traditional burial plots, and “niches”, which are placement sites within the Columbarium. Proceeds from plot and niche sales go in the perpetual care fund.

The current price for a plot in Bethlehem’s Cemetery for members is \$550; for non-members it is \$850. For one niche in the Columbarium, available to members only, it is \$750. These prices have been in place since July 1, 2016. If one considers what inflation has done to these prices over 10 years, the prices would now be: \$770, \$1,190 and \$1,050 respectfully.

The Cemetery Board during their October meeting voted to increase these prices to keep them in line with inflation. Therefore, starting February 1, 2027, the price for a plot will increase to \$850 for members and \$1,200 for non-members. The Columbarium niche price will increase to \$1,050. Even with these significant increases, these prices are lower than most other local cemeteries.

We are sharing this information now so that those considering a plot or niche have time to plan before the new prices take effect.

The cost of interment (burial) or inurnment (placement in the Columbarium) is a separate cost from the plot or niche and is a service arranged through the funeral home. It should be noted that it is permitted to have two cremains buried in one plot.

If you wish to purchase a plot or niche, please contact Jerry Brandenberger before January 1, 2027, and David Powell after that. If you have any questions for the Board, please contact me.

Respectfully, Thom Solecki, Cemetery Board President



Thank You!

Dear Bethlehem United Church of Christ,

Thank you very much for your generous contribution of \$1,000.00 to the Hadi Shriners' Transportation Fund. This fund is used to provide transportation for patients and their families to and from the Shriners' Hospitals for Children. While most of our trips go to the St. Louis Hospital, we also transport patients to the Hospitals in Chicago, Dayton, and Lexington.

All services are provided at no cost to patients and their families at the Shriners Hospitals for Children, regardless of the family's ability to pay. Transportation, meals, and lodging, provided by Hadi, are also furnished at no cost to the patients or their families and are paid for from the Hadi Shrine Transportation Fund. Our primary source of funding for the Transportation Fund comes from generous donations from people like you, and it is very much appreciated. Because of your generosity, we can continue to provide this very valuable service.

Sincerely,

Ira David Bevins
2026 Potentate
Hadi Shriners

Dear Bethlehem UCC,

Your generosity means more to us than we can say. Thank you for standing with Back Bay Mission and believing in this work- not just as a charity, but as a movement for justice and dignity on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Your gift (\$853.50) to Friends of Mission allows us to respond immediately when a family is on the brink of losing power, when someone has nowhere safe to sleep, when a homeowner is fighting to stay in the house they've worked their whole life for, or when a neighbor simply needs food on the table
continued



Thank You!

and someone to listen. Because of you, we can show up quickly and compassionately, meeting urgent needs without hesitation.

Every day, your support helps push back against the systems that keep people struggling. It helps us keep our doors open wide as a place of welcome, a place of safety, and a place where every single person is treated with the dignity and respect they so deserve.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and your courage to invest in a more just and loving community. This work is only possible because of people like you. Thank you for walking alongside us.

Rev. James Pennington
Executive Director

Dear Outreach Committee and Bethlehem UCC,

Thank you so very much for the \$1,000 donation from the Voigt Family Trust. This money will help provide a child precious time with his/her parent. Without support like yours, children will continue to feel the pain of family separation. On behalf of them, thank you!

Kathryn
Parenting Time Center, Inc.

The office received a thank you note and donation from Evansville Day School for the use of our kitchen.



Thank You!

Dear Outreach Committee and Bethlehem UCC,

We are truly grateful for the generous \$1,000 gift from Bethlehem UCC. Your kindness makes a direct and lasting difference for the children and families we serve in our community.

With your congregation's support, a child struggling with the pain of trauma can find healing. A parent overwhelmed by life's challenges can find hope. Families who might otherwise be unable to afford mental health services can continue to have access to the care they desperately need.

Your generosity funds our expert mental health care, and with that care it also brings peace, builds resilience, and creates brighter futures for those in our community.

On behalf of our staff, Board of Directors, and especially the families you are supporting through your gift, thank you for understanding our mission and strengthening the community through our work. We are honored to have your partnership.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Lynn Kyle
Executive Director
Lampion Center

A handwritten addition from Lynn Kyle: Thank you so much! Words cannot adequately express how thankful we are for your generous support!! These are very difficult times for families, especially those with mental health challenges. Thank you for standing strong for us so we can be strong and available for them.



Thank You!

Dear Outreach Committee and Bethlehem UCC,

On behalf of The Excel Center® Evansville Southeast, thank you for your generous donation (\$1,000). Your contribution makes it possible for us to help Indiana adults earn their high school diploma and assisting them with breaking barriers they may face along the way. Your generosity doesn't just make an impact in a single moment. It creates a ripple effect that moves forward from one person to the next, empowering individuals, families, and neighborhoods across our community.

Since opening its doors in August 2024, The Excel Center Evansville Southeast has helped over 50 Indiana adults receive their high school diploma, with 18 who graduated in April 2025 and another 38 in December 2025. We have over 200 incredible students who are still on their path to graduating and have been working hard to reach their educational and career goals thanks to the support of donors like you.

Sincerely,

Connie Ralph

President/CEO, The Excel Center/Evansville Goodwill Industries

In response to my husband's Douglas King's death, a grateful Thank You! to those of you who remembered me in prayer, gave me a hug, called, or sent a card.

Pat King



Thank You!

Thank you so much for remembering us during Pastor Appreciation Month. From the reception, to the beautiful mum, to the many thoughtful cards and comments, we feel so seen and loved. It is our privilege to be part of Bethlehem and to serve alongside each of you. Thank you for being part of this ministry with us and for all the ways you support us!

Pastors Emily and Doug

Thank you to everyone who took to time to call, sent a card, or stopped by to check on me following my fall. I really do appreciate it.

Theresa Cravens

With Humility and Love...

Doris and her Family Thank You for your care, concern, gifts, music, and ministry in her Memory.

We were all granted many (extra) years of Her Life as child, daughter, sister, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother...and Friend.

She made it easy to say goodbye. She chose Bethlehem, The Sc ripture, The Music and her Final Words.

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime..."
(Reinhold Niebuhr)

Her Seat in the Sanctuary needs to be filled.

Steve, Patty, Sean, Robyn, [Michelle, Ben and Alex] Oglesby

Luann Bird, Morgan, [Elliott & Harrison] Reaves; Katy, [Torry & Jackson] Hope



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.***