



The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past – Faith in Our Future

October 2026

The Women of Bethlehem

BOOK & BAKE SALE

Great selection in
all categories!

October 24 & October 25

just
BAKED

Pastor's Perspective



We just completed our first unit for Confirmation, the unit on worship. As you might expect, we talked about the basics like the Sacraments and the liturgical year. But what I most want them to understand is *why* we worship and why it matters **that** we worship. I wonder whether we give that much thought outside of. . . say. . . Confirmation class. Why *do* we gather week after week to sing, listen, study, and pray?

Maybe a mini-Confirmation lesson could help us all.

Conversations about worship services often center around our productivity. Was the time well spent? Did I get something out of it? Did I learn something? Did I enjoy myself? These questions should only be one part of our thinking, though. In fact, we may even need to “rein them in” a bit, as our consumer culture threatens to spill into something that is supposed to be primarily about God. When we gather together for worship, our primary task is not to receive, but to give. Worship is meant to be the time we *give* to God. It’s meant to be our response to all God has done for us.

We could never dream of having anything at our disposal that could repay God for the blessings of this life, but during the worship hour, that’s what we are trying to do! In worship, we open our hearts, focus our minds, lift our voices, and give of our time, talents, and treasures *to God*.

Now, worship is far from a one-way street. I hope you *do* leave worship feeling encouraged, having learned something, and empowered to live as Christ’s disciples out in the world. But these things we take away from worship are not the primary aims of our time spent together. What we get back is a blessed byproduct of what we intend.

We might think of giving a birthday gift to someone we love. It makes us feel so good to see them so happy, but we don't give the gift *to produce our own happiness*. That would get the whole concept of a birthday present exactly backward. Likewise with worship—it is meant to be our gift to God. That the joy of our offerings might rebound back on us, leaving us fulfilled, encouraged, or inspired is a happy bonus.

Worship is primarily about giving to God. But it also does something else important. Worship forms our identity as a church. Worshiping the Triune God is the distinctive activity of the Church. It is what sets us apart from other charitable organizations and faith traditions. You don't have to be a Christian to feed the hungry. You don't have to be a Christian to tend to those whose homes are destroyed by natural disasters.

The reason we are a church and not something else is because of who we worship. We serve others and love others not out of some general sense of goodwill or out of hope that if we help others, someone will show up in our own time of need. We live this way for a particular reason: **because we are called to do so by the One we worship weekly.**

It may be more efficient to just do the “practical” stuff—donate, volunteer, bring a casserole to one who is sick. But worship is where we remember that our love of neighbor flows from our love of God. Worship is where we rehearse our Story and recall our identity. It is foundational for all we do as a church.

This is why it's the first unit in Confirmation. Without it, we could be anybody. When we gather together to sing the hymns*, read the Scripture, and hear the preached word, we remember that we belong to the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Friends, I hope to see you in worship!

* For my non-singing friends, please open the hymnal anyway and meditate on the words. There is so much rich theology to take in from our hymnary!



Sunday School!

Learn what our children are doing!

Nursery (Birth to age 3)

Our youngest members, from infants through age 3, are invited to play and spend time in the nursery during the Sunday School hour. Mrs. Randi and a helper are ready each week to welcome our little ones with care, play, and plenty of smiles.

Even at this young age, children are beginning to learn what church is all about. Our hope is that the nursery becomes one of their first experiences of church as a safe, welcoming, and fun place where they belong.

Pre-School and Kindergarten

A step up from our nursery students, our preschool and kindergarten children meet with Mrs. Alex and Mrs. Judy for play-based learning and faith formation. Through stories, activities, games, and play, they are learning about God's love for them and for the world around them, as well as what it means to be part of a church family.

They are also beginning to put their faith into action—learning to show God's love through the way they interact with one another and with the world around them. These little ones are discovering that church is a place where they are loved, welcomed, and encouraged to share that love with others.

Children (1st-5th)

Mrs. Margaret and our 1st–5th grade students are taking a deep dive into the Old Testament this year! Assisting Mrs. Margaret and the students, you will see Mrs. Dee, Paula, and Jackie. In September, we explored the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah’s Ark, and the Tower of Babel.



In October, we will continue the story with the call of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the story of Jacob. Along the way, students are learning the stories, asking thoughtful questions, and discovering that these are more than just individual Bible stories—they are pieces of God’s bigger story.

As we journey through the Old Testament, students are beginning to see how God’s promises, people, and plans unfold throughout Scripture and ultimately lead us to Jesus. It has been wonderful to watch them engage with these stories, wrestle with their questions, and grow in their understanding of the Bible!

Confirmation (6th-7th)

Working with Pastor Emily and several congregational mentors, our students are learning more about what it means to be part of the church. Through conversation, questions, and time spent getting to know members of our congregation, they are exploring their faith and taking meaningful steps toward making a personal decision about joining the church.

Youth (8th-12th)

Our 8th–12th grade students meet with Mr. Mike and Mrs. Niki in the youth room each week for Sunday School. Their conversations cover everything from special interests, books, music, friendships, and school to the questions and challenges that come with growing in their faith. *continued*

Through these conversations and time together, students are building friendships and a community of support beyond their home schools. They are learning what it means to walk alongside one another in faith—celebrating, questioning, encouraging, and supporting each other along the way. Using the Grow curriculum as a guide, students turn to Scripture as they explore their faith and learn to navigate the world around them.

Church Outing to Louisville

Jesus Christ Superstar



You voted and the results are in!

You voted and the results are in! Thank you for your submissions for ideas for the Voigt funds distribution. This month, the Church Council approved these gifts to support important work in our community and beyond! The amounts approved were based on the number of votes each organization received. We are grateful for your ideas and direction.

We offer these gifts rooted in our commitment to following Jesus by sharing our resources and loving our neighbors!

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates): \$4,030

Culver Clothes Closet: \$2,000

Young and Established: \$1,000

CAJE (Congregations Acting for Justice and Empowerment): \$750

Evansville Young Life: \$750

Standing Stones Ministry: \$750

Aurora: \$500

Bosse Constructed Creations: \$500

St. Lucas Feeding Ministry: \$500

Tri-State Food Bank: \$500

Back Bay Mission: \$200

Fellowship of Christian Athletes: \$200

North High School Choir: \$200

Tribe Forged Ministries: \$200

Vanderburgh Humane Society: \$200



Water is the driving force of all nature.
(Leonardo DaVinci)

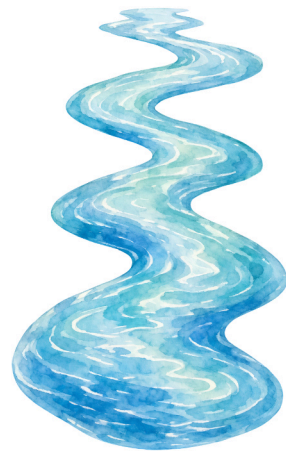
Water sustains our bodies, our communities and our spiritual life. Water is necessary for all living things.

A human can only survive about three days without water. The earth is 71% water. However, 97% of that water is sea water (salt water) which cannot be used for drinking water, irrigation or other day-to-day needs. About 2% of the earth's water is frozen. That leaves a mere 1% of the earth's waters for drinking, maintaining our communities and spiritual needs. This means it is critical that fresh water remain clean and well managed. For many years, our fresh water (rivers and lakes) was being polluted. It became so bad that there were rivers on fire! Finally, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Clean Water Act (CWA) in 1977. This was done over the veto of President Nixon. The act provided resources for the EPA to clean up polluted fresh water sources. Restrictions were imposed on dumping waste, especially toxic materials. Over time, water resources improved considerably. Unfortunately, the CWA is undergoing significant revisions by the EPA to narrow federal water protections following a Supreme Court decision. Clean water may be in jeopardy.

Water in the Bible is a powerful symbol for spiritual rebirth, eternal life and God's sustaining presence.

Water is referenced 722 times in the Bible.

Because water is essential for life, cleaning and symbolism, water in some form appears in nearly all 66 books. The first time we see water addressed is in Genesis when the wind from God swept over the face of the waters. God later said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." One of the most powerful stories of the power of God



and water is in Exodus 14. God's power is used to hold back the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape the forces of the Pharaoh and their bondage in Egypt. God uses water for purification as noted in Ezekiel 36:25: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." Water is used in the sacrament of baptism. Water is used for repentance, after which the individual has a new Life. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. There are many other stories from scripture about how water played an integral part in God's plan. Those include Noah's Ark (Genesis 5:9), Jesus and Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:22), woman at the well (John 4:6), and water into wine (John 2:1).

God has provided us with all the things we need to live a good and faithful life. It is our responsibility to respect what God has given to us, and treat our world with a thankful heart.



Greetings, Bethlehem Folks,

We are finally into fall! What a relief from the heat! As always, there is still a lot going on at Bethlehem. I am most excited for the WEB Book and Bake Sale at the end of October! Also, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you to return your pledge cards. We had a great video series and great messages during our stewardship time, but we are still lacking many pledge cards in relation to years past. Turning in your pledge cards helps us to plan the finances for the following year, so please get those back to us. As always, reach out if you have questions or concerns that I can help you with.

Blessings,

Amy Spurling
Church Council President



• JOIN US FOR A •

PICNIC

IN THE

Pavilion

Sunday, October 18

Following Worship Service

The church will provide fried chicken and drinks. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Dishes may be dropped off in the kitchen before worship. Some seating will be available—lawn chairs are encouraged.

QUESTIONS?

MARGARET EBERHART

859-576-1442



We welcomed to worship our most recent UCC/DOC Habitat homeowner Sherricka Meriweather, and provided her with multiple gift cards and a mattress and frame set to help with new ownership. This year, we exceeded our commitment to Habitat's housing mission by \$23,000.

Financial Recap

August General Account

	2026	2025
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 188,201.65	\$ 131,423.74
Monthly Pledge Deposits	41,178.49	28,563.52
Monthly Other Deposits	1,464.26	10,804.38
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(38,209.02)	(47,457.99)
Monthly Other Disbursements	(6,308.36)	(1,860.66)
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 186,327.02</u>	<u>\$ 121,472.99</u>

YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 168,584.96	\$ 170,535.44
Pledge Deposits	329,292.96	271,893.91
Other Deposits	16,246.48	21,908.51
Operating Disbursements	(345,255.40)	(349,652.23)
Other Disbursements	17,458.02	6,787.36
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 186,327.02</u>	<u>\$ 121,472.99</u>





**Sri Lanka Partnership
Update! SAVE THE DATE for
a Video Zoom Gathering on
October 7!**

For nearly 40 years, the Indiana Kentucky Conference has shared a journey of shalom with our partners in Sri Lanka.

Together, we have advocated for peace during the Sri Lankan Civil War, supported education and rebuilding, and learned from one another what it means to seek justice and live into God's vision of shalom. This relationship has grown far beyond a ministry we support—it has become a connection that has enriched the lives and faith of people on both sides of the partnership.

The video will premiere during a **Zoom gathering on Wednesday, October 7, at 7 p.m. ET**. Following the presentation, we will have time for questions, conversation, and reflection. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate nearly four decades of friendship and continue seeking the path of shalom together.

To learn more, watch this video on [YouTube](#). To join the gathering, use this [Zoom](#) link.

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.

Oct. 6 Exodus 32:1-14
Philippians 4:1-9
Matthew 22:1-14

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

Oct. 20 Deuteronomy 34:1-12
I Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46

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



It's Harvest time – time for picking and enjoying apples! The Eosin Sunday School Class will be selling our famous Dutch Apple Crumb Pies to benefit missions. We will be taking PREPAID orders once again this year. To be assured of getting pies please complete the form at the bottom of this page and put it in the Eosin mailbox or leave it in the office. Please make your checks out to Eosin. The pies will be made on Thursday, November 12, this year. Plan to pick up your pies between 2:00 and 5:00 PM that evening.

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.



UPDATES FROM OUTREACH



The next canned fruit collection weekend for the Tri-State Food Bank is Saturday, October 3, and Sunday, October 4. In September, 145 items were donated! We hope you'll pick up some cans of fruit (with pull-tabs, if possible) and bring them to worship on the 3rd or 4th. The cans will be displayed by the altar as a tangible symbol of feeding others as we are spiritually fed at the communion table. Upcoming collection dates for the rest of 2026:

November 14 and 15

December 5 and 6

Thank you for your generosity and ongoing support of the Tri-State Food Bank!

It's Here! Bucket Blitz on October 4th

On Sunday, October 4, the Fellowship Hall will be filled with 5-gallon buckets, children and their Sunday School teachers, and items needed for cleaning up and recovering from various kinds of natural disasters. You are invited to stop in during the Sunday School hour to watch our annual Bucket Blitz!



Thanks to the generosity of our congregation at the Outreach Team's Time and Talent Auction earlier this year, the Bucket Blitz is completely funded! Our

children will be filling 40 buckets with emergency clean-up supplies for Church World Service, which will be transported to Indianapolis, and subsequently sent wherever they may be needed.

Bethlehem also serves as a Bucket Depot, meaning that other churches may drop off buckets and various kinds of kits (hygiene items, school supplies, etc.) to our Burgoo Building.



The Bucket Blitz is one of Outreach's major projects seeking to fulfill our mission of "encouraging the congregation to carry out an active program of service, mission, and benevolence". (pictures from 2018 Bucket Blitz)

Neighbors in Need Special Offering



Neighbors in Need is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third supports the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Bethlehem will be collecting for this special offering from October 10 through November 8. Special giving envelopes will be found in the pews and on tables by all church entrances. Gifts may also be made online at bethlehemucc.org.



**Join
Us!**

The Women of Bethlehem

BOOK & BAKE SALE

**Great selection in
all categories!**

Saturday, October 24
2:00 - 5:00 pm

Sunday, October 25
following worship

Bethlehem UCC Fellowship Hall
Open to the Community!

**Proceeds benefit
future mission-
related projects.**

6400 Oak Hill Rd., Evansville

get to know our new members

John and Cathy French

We moved to Evansville from Angola, a small town in N.E. Indiana where we enjoyed living for 40 years. We transferred from UCC 1st Congregational Church, Angola. We moved to Evansville to live closer to Jordan and Brooke (French) and family. We are looking forward to going on the mission trip next month and getting to know more church members.



Thank You!

We at United Caring Services extend our sincerest gratitude to for your generous contribution. Every donation has a great impact on the guests that utilize our services on a daily basis.

We send our appreciation to you for helping United Caring Services continue to be a place in the community that shelters and provides services to our guests with dignity and compassion. Your commitment to our mission makes a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.

Together, we're creating a brighter future for our community!

Ryan Rigg

Executive Director



Thank You!

Dear Friends at Bethlehem United Church of Christ.

Thank you for your \$1,545.00 donation to the United Church of Christ Refugee Enabling Fund. You are part of the United Church of Christ, uniting with us to give everyone a voice and working with the Holy Spirit toward a just world for all. As you stand with us, we confront the injustices of our day.

Thank you, too, for your \$1,000 donation to the UCC Venezuela earthquake relief.

Your support allows UCC Disaster Ministries to bridge the gaps between the assistance offered by first-time responders and community revitalization. We can provide aid to individuals from the early stages of recovery and relief throughout the long-term recover phase. Communities faced with devastating challenges find strength and hope in knowing that you care.

We offer extravagant welcome and radial hospitality to work seeking lives of deeper meaning and great value. Our churches are powerful in witness to Christ's love for all people.

Our witness matter in the world, and your witness matters in this world. With your generous gift, we can do this work.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President

Thank You!

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all the cards and other acts of kindness following the horrific accident and death of my son, Phillip Gaffney.

Also, I would like to thank Pastor Emily for the meaningful funeral service for Phil. I've had nothing but wonderful comments about the service.

Please continue to pray for Phil and everyone who loved him.

Sincerely,

Diane Gaffney and family

Dear Bethlehem Family,

Thank you so much for the beautiful service for our father, Bill Craig. We couldn't have felt more at home in our "home" church. Having Pam Small assisting on the day of the funeral was wonderful. Emily's service was beautiful as well. I'm delaying in sending thank yous.

Peace be with you

Sandy Alter (Craig)

Directory Update



Please contact church office.



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.***