

Pastor's Perspective



When I teach the Confirmands about the Church calendar, they quickly notice the bulk of the year is spent in "Ordinary Time." The season's name makes it sound like it's just the same old, same old—from Pentecost (usually end of May/beginning of June) until Advent starts again!

Ho hum.

But I try to push back against that notion, reminding the kids that, in fact, most of our growth happens during the ordinary days. I'll tell them, "One day, you put on a pair of pants that always fit before, and suddenly it doesn't. You grew and you didn't even know it!" For us adults (whose pants may also suddenly no longer fit, but we're less inclined to want to discuss that!): How many of us have noticed that a child we've seen every day suddenly looks like he grew three inches? It happens, even without us noticing. Like magic.

The same is true about our spiritual lives. Through the day-in, day-out (ordinary) practices of reading Scripture, praying, singing hymns, fellowshipping with believers, and faithfully living out God's kingdom values in our daily lives, we grow in ways we don't even notice while it's happening, I tell disbelieving tweens and teenagers.

Well, if you're not buying my "Ordinary Time" spiel either and think "ordinary" is synonymous with "boring," there's good news for you at Bethlehem. Five out of the next six Sundays will "not be ordinary" beginning with a double baptism (which likely has already happened by the time you read this) on March 30. For the rest of the special events, see following page:

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April 12/13 - Palm Sunday

April 20 (joint service) - Easter

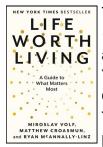
April 27 - Confirmation Sunday

May 4 - Outdoor Worship and Earth Day

We have so many special occasions for gathering for worship, and I hope you'll make plans to join us for them. I especially want to encourage you to come to our Confirmation service on April 27. Our young people need our support, and it is our responsibility (but also our joy!) as members of this congregation to show up to welcome them into full membership. It will be an exciting day for all!



Congratulations to Brian Newton who received the vote of affirmation of the Evansville Tri-State Association to be eligible for ordination within the United Church of Christ. This took place at last month's annual meeting of the ETSA. Let us continue to pray for Brian as he seeks a call to a congregation, which will then make him eligible for ordination.



This summer, I am offering a book study on *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* by Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz. The book is based on a class taught at Yale University that explores what the authors refer to as "The Question" (what makes for a good, meaningful, worthwhile life?). The book draws on wisdom literature from various religious and philosophical traditions to lead each of us toward a clearer vision of

what matters most. I hope you'll consider joining this study. Before setting a meeting schedule, I'd like to gather a list of interested participants. If you'd like to be part of this summer study, please let me know by May 1.

April Sunday School Overview Children

The children will continue with a movie theme through the month of April. Each week they will learn about a story that Jesus told. They will bring home a "Grow at Home" flyer with ideas for reinforcing and discussing what we learn each week in class. I hope you will find this helpful when you aren't getting much information



about what they did in Sunday School! Please believe me when I say they are engaged and learning each week! We love our curriculum and are blessed to have experienced teachers working with our kids each week!



April 6 - Sunday School Week 3 "Big Picture" April 13 - Sunday School Week 4 "Big Picture" Palm Sunday, April 20 - (Children meet in Confirmation Room before service to participate in palm waving) April 20 - Week 5 "Big Picture" Easter Sunday April 27 - New Sunday School Unit TBA; Confirmation May 18 - Last Day of Sunday School June 22-25—Vacation Bible School

What we're teaching!

Pre-K - 6th Grade

BIG PICTURE: Series from the Gospels on Jesus' Teachings

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Every great movie tells a great story. When we see those stories played out on the big screen, we can learn a little more about ourselves and the world around us. Jesus knew how powerful stories could be, and he made them a big part of *Continued*

how he taught his followers. In this 5-week series, kids will hear some of the stories Jesus shared that can help them see the big picture of a life spent following God. Kids will see that **God helps us know what's true**, the ways **we can give back to God**, how **God sends us helpers**, and how **God gives us second chances**.

Youth

We are excited for our Confirmands to join the YOUTH GROUP for Sunday School in May! Niki Traylor and Mike Slade are excited to add them to the group and share our awesome youth curriculum with them. Parents, help us keep the momentum of Confirmation going by making Sunday School a priority for your teen. The material is REALLY good and FUN! See below for a preview of the April curriculum.



7th-12th (not in confirmation)

INVITED: A 6-Week Series from the Gospels and Acts on the Resurrection



SERIES OVERVIEW:

There's nothing like throwing a party to celebrate the people you love. Be it for a birthday, an achievement, or a new chapter of life, parties give us a reason to gather, laugh, and create new memories together. And if we really stopped to look around, we'd find so many reasons to celebrate what's happening in our lives that the parties would never stop. In this 6-week series, we'll see what it's like when we celebrate all that God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We'll celebrate that with Jesus, everyone's invited, and we'll celebrate who Jesus is. Then, we'll see how we're invited to remember what Jesus has done, let Jesus make us new, follow the Holy Spirit's lead, and learn how Jesus invites us to invite others.



Join us! Weekend Services - Saturday at 5:30 pm Sunday at 10: 15 am

Palm Sunday Weekend, April 12, 5:30 pm April 13, 10:15 am

Maundy Thursday, April 17, 6:30 pm

Easter Worship, April 20, 10:15 am, with egg hunt following worship (grade 5 and younger)

Chase Cline and Emily Westrich

Emily and I had been looking for a church for awhile, we even briefly attended a few services but nothing felt like home. One day we were driving down Oak Hill and she mentioned that Bethlehem offered a Saturday night service which was perfect for us due to our schedules. So one night we showed up (parked on the wrong side of the building and had to walk all the way around) and as we were approaching the doors we had this brief moment of "are we sure we want to go in?" But we made eye contact with Pastor Doug through the window and something about that diminished all doubt. Once we got inside everyone was so welcoming and the message/service was delivered beautifully. Emily and I decided to come back a



few more times. Each time we sat with new people and again, everything from the crowd to the message felt as if it was exactly what we were looking for. We then decided to attend a Sunday service. After talking with Pastor Emily and also getting to hear her service, we just knew that Bethlehem was the place for us.

Sharon Grabert



I had known about Bethlehem UCC for years, as I had grown up in Trinity UCC in Mt. Vernon. After not having attended church for years, I decided it was time to seek support in a unifying group. I heard some club friends talking about one in our group who had recently joined Bethlehem after having looked at several churches. I was looking for an active and vital church, which is what I found at Bethlehem. Thank you for welcoming me!

Chris Jones

I originally attended Bethlehem as a child from the ages of 7-16. I even went through confirmation at Bethlehem. My picture is in the hallway behind the altar. My dad and stepmother met there and eventually were married at Bethlehem too. When my stepmother, Lyn passed away Easter of 2023, I started attending Bethlehem with my father, Max. So I have been a guest for almost 2 years now. I had a church of my own that I had been attending for over 26 years. Old North United Methodist is where my wife and I were married. I did not care for the way



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they handled the whole Covid pandemic, so I was already searching for a new church family. After attending Bethlehem these last couple years, I felt like life had come full circle and I was back home. I knew this is where I was supposed to be.

I have been married to my wife, Donna, for 26 yrs. I am a father of four daughters and one son. I also have six grandchildren. I am a corporate sales manager for General Rubber and Plastics. I just had my 31-year work anniversary there. I am a former high school and travel soccer coach.

Ashly and Scott McCain



Ashly and I met at Indiana University and moved back to my hometown of Evansville during the COVID-19 pandemic. My family has been going here for many years, and we would occasionally visit. Being from Fort Worth, TX, Ashly wanted to find a home church here in Evansville. Shortly after moving back, we got engaged and later married at Bethlehem UCC in October 2024.

Currently, we live on the northside of Evansville in McCutchanville and work in the public safety sector. Ashly

works for the Vanderburgh County Health Department as a program manager for the Pre-3 Department, and I am a Firefighter.

"We cannot thank Bethlehem and the family of believers enough for welcoming us with open arms."

Stephanie Weiner



I'm Stephanie Weiner, a lifelong UCC'er. Even before that, I was part of the E and R, so you have some idea of my age, as the E and R's helped form the UCC in 1957. I grew up in Henderson and graduated from UK. I also hold degrees from Eden and Princeton Seminaries. I'm a rewired (pun intentional) pastor having served congregations in Fort Wayne, IN, Webster Groves, MO, Montclair, NJ, and here in Evansville. I also served on the FL and IN-KY conference staffs. I believe in the third act, the time in retirement when

we can give back on a volunteer basis. I serve on the boards of Good Samaritan and of my condo association and on the UCC committee for Habitat. I am an Annuitant Visitor for the Pension Board of the UCC. I joined Bethlehem because of our foci on mission, faith formation, and our strong pastoral leadership. As a single person with no biological children, I appreciate that Bethlehem is an intergenerational church. I'm a strong supporter of CAJE. I'm concerned about the environment and have joined the Green Team. I know several members and am looking forward to knowing more. Having experienced worship, including Ash Wednesday, an annual meeting, and pie day, I'm sure God has called me to the right congregation. Thank you for the warm welcome.





Ocean Theme at Sunday School





continued













CONNIE and AUGUST KOCH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Now Accepting Applications Application Deadline - May 31, 2025

The CONNIE and AUGUST KOCH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND is administered by Bethlehem United Church of Christ. A \$1,000 scholarship may be awarded to anyone living in Vanderburgh County, Indiana in 2025 for the 2025-2026 academic year. Preference will be given to applicants if they are members of Bethlehem and pursuing a course of instruction leading to a degree in a health or education-related field is preferred.

Detailed instructions and guidelines are available with the applications and may be obtained on the information wall outside the church office or by scanning the QR code.

Please return the completed application, including a certified copy of your academic transcript, to the Memorial Committee mailbox (by the church elevator), no later than May 31, 2025.







The Altar Guild is taking orders for Easter lilies that will be placed on our altar Easter Sunday, April 20th. We currently have 30 pre-ordered, with no opportunity to order more. If you are interested in purchasing a lily (\$14 each) with the mention of "In Memory Of ... "-"In Celebration Of ... "-"To the Glory of God"—"In Thanksgiving For..." or other wording, please complete an order form currently available at church entrances, outside the church office, or by contacting Cindy Carwile at ckcarwile@gmail.com . A complete list of donors will be available at sanctuary entrances.

*Please plan to take the lily (lilies) you ordered after worship on Easter Sunday. Lilies not retrieved will be available in the church vestibule beginning Monday. April 21, for anyone who would like to plant one or more in their own yard to bloom the following spring.

The Bethlehem STAR



Gene Hartz

Louis E. "Gene" Hartz, 88, of Evansville passed away Wednesday, March 19, 2025. He was born January 12, 1937 in Tell City, IN to the late Joseph and Lilly (Naegele) Hartz.



He graduated from the University of Evansville in 1959 with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and earned his Master's Degree from Indiana University. Gene

started working at Vogel Elementary School in 1959, where he met Norma Bromm. They married December 21, 1963. He retired from Vogel in 1999. He was an outdoorsman and enjoyed fishing, hunting with his black lab, Molly, and drinking coffee at Donut Bank. Gene was a lifetime member of ISTA and NEA, and was also a member of the Retired Teachers Association.

Gene was preceded in death by his parents, and brother, Robert J. Hartz. He is survived by his loving wife of 61 years, Norma (Bromm) Hartz, son and daughter-in-law, Robert A. and Kathy Hartz, and grandson, Jacob Hartz. A funeral service was held at 11:00 a.m. Monday, March 24, 2025, at Alexander East Chapel, officiated by Pastor Doug Turner, with burial following in Bethlehem UCC Cemetery. Friends and family visited from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Sunday, March 23, 2025, and from 10:00 a.m. until service time on Monday at the funeral home.

The family would like to thank Brickyard Brentwood and Gentiva Hospice for their care and compassion during Gene's final days. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Bethlehem United Church of Christ.

CAJE

CONGREGATIONS ACTING FOR JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

&

CONGREGATIONS ACTING FOR JUSTICE EMPOWERMENT - CAJE

Friends, this is the season of Public Action for CAJE

Grassroots Democracy in action through faithful congregations is how we bring the love of God and the way of Jesus Christ into the decision-making process for the priorities and allocation of public resources for our community.

Please take advantage of this opportunity to participate.

APRIL 7– CAJE Rally, 6:30 PM Central United Methodist Church, 300 Mary Street

This is the gathering at which the Action Items for the Nehemiah Rally, as well as process and purpose, will be discussed, voted upon and finalized.

MAY 5 – Nehemiah Action, 6:30pm Bosse High School, Washington Ave & Highway 41

This is the gathering at which our Action Items will be presented to our elected officials who have the capacity to allocate public funding and political support for the ACTION that We The People have determined will benefit our community.

We need at least 1,000 community members present.

This event will be well organized, well scripted, and respectful of all participants.

Please plan to be present representing the Faith and Vision of Bethlehem UCC.



Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, started to raise awareness about protecting Earth's natural resources. Throughout April, various activities encourage us to enjoy nature and adopt lifestyle changes to reduce climate change. This call to environmental stewardship echoes the wisdom in the Psalms, reminding us of our divine responsibility to care for God's creation.

As Psalm 8 declares in verse one, "O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" Nothing shows us God's awesome power better than the Earth. In verse six, David reminds us that humans are given dominion over creation - that implies stewardship and care - not exploitation of its resources. Taking care of the Earth is an act of worship, proclaiming, "How majestic is Your name in all the earth!"

The Psalms also inspire us to act through their joyful celebration of nature. Psalm 65:8 proclaims, "They who dwell at the ends of the earth stand in awe of Your signs; You make the sunrise and the sunset shout for joy." Psalm 96:12-13 calls on creation itself to rejoice: "May the field be jubilant, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy."

The Green Team urges everyone to get involved, get informed, and get outside!

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3 Ways to Make a Difference Now



Did you know unplugging unused chargers or appliances like coffee pots could reduce your overall energy consumption by up to 10%? Another quick way to turn these off is to use a power strip - just switch it off when you are done.



Use Cloth Instead of Paper

A simple switch from paper towels to cloth kitchen towels will reduce waste, lower your carbon footprint, and prevent deforestation. Next time you're at the grocery store, ask for paper bags instead of plastic or bring cloth. Paper or cloth bags can be reused.



Some plastic take-out containers can be reused; just check the bottom to see if they have the recycle symbol. They are great for sending food home with guests or packing lunch. You can also use them to hold sewing supplies or nails.



Mark Your Calendar for Fun!

Earth Day Sustainability Kits at Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library Branches (East, West, or Stringtown)

First-Come First-Served from April 12th - 22nd

Stop by your local EVPL branch (East, West, or Stringtown) to pick up a free

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Earth Day Sustainability Kit to help you navigate a more sustainable lifestyle. They will have these kits available at those three branches while supplies last.

Free Tree Give Away at Wesselman Woods

Saturday, April 12 @ 9 a.m.

Wesselman Woods is giving residents a tree as part of a strategic tree-planting initiative! Make sure to get there early as the trees go fast. Trees mitigate the problems caused by stormwater, clean the air, reduce urban heat, create a healthier environment, reduce noise pollution, and help fight food insecurity. Karen Joy Fowler said, "Trees are as close to immortality as the rest of us ever come."

Party for the Planet at Evansville's Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden

Saturday, April 12 @ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Free with general admission or membership, this Party for the Planet will celebrate Earth and the diversity of life within. The party will "Spring into Action!" with activity stations, animal encounters, keeper chats, animal feedings, vendors, live music, and entertainment. Come learn how to make a difference with meaningful everyday action.

Celebration of Earth Day at Wesselman Woods

Saturday, April 19 @ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This free community event includes interactive booths, nature-based activities, and live demonstrations. Enjoy the trails or play on the Nature Playscape and enjoy the beauty of the largest urban old-growth forest in the U.S., right in our *Continued*

own backyard! You can grab lunch at the local food trucks from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Forest Wisdom: Community Resilience at Wesselman Woods

Sunday, April 27 @ 4 p.m to 5:30 p.m. RSVP to wesslemanwoods.org/ forestwisdom

Forest Wisdom is a free four-part series of conversations and experiences focused on how healthy ecosystems can be a model for building human connections and resilience. The first session, presented by Amy Rhodes, is about "The Human-Nature Connection." Mark your calendars for the remaining sessions: June 29, August 24, and October 26.

Bethlehem UCC Annual Earth Day Service

Sunday, May 4th @ 10:15 in West Parking Lot

Join us outside for Bethlehem's annual Earth Day Worship for inspiration and interaction, which the Rev. Kimron Reising and the Green Team are planning.



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. It's easy to be an altar flower donor to celebrate an anniversary or birthday or remember a loved one. Prices are \$40 for two vases and \$35 for one centerpiece.

View all available dates <u>and</u> online sign-up instructions are at bethlehemucc.org. To streamline the process, please sign up online if at all possible or contact Cindy Carwile at <u>ckcarwile@gmail.com</u>. Paper forms are available outside the church office.

Available dates in the coming months:

May 18, 25 June 1, 8, 22 July 6, 20, 27



Financial Recap

February General Account	2025	2024
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 150,745.51	\$ 221,186.61
Monthly Pledge Deposits	57,125.77	41,029.12
Monthly Other Deposits	681.28	1,248.15
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(40,242.73)	(34,777.38)
Monthly Other Disbursements	5,720.31	(19,916.24)
Monthly Ending Balance	\$ 174,030.14	\$ 208,770.26
<u>YTD General Account</u> Beginning Balance Pledge Deposits Other Deposits Operating Disbursements Other Disbursements Ending Balance	<pre>\$ 170,535.44 80,044.54 2,654.30 (89,129.45) 9,925.31 \$ 174,030.14</pre>	<pre>\$ 182,223.60 65,447.09 2,584.46 (74,260.54) 32,775.65 \$ 208,770.26</pre>



Dear Rev. Slade and the members of Bethlehem United Church of Christ,

On behalf of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and those served by your generosity, I thank you. Whether your

donation to SVdP helped with someone's monthly rent, a utility bill, a few days of groceries, a couch or kitchen table, or a car repair to help keep someone getting to work, you ultimately helped a family from becoming homeless.

Treating homelessness is costly. Preventing homelessness isn't. It costs an average of \$35,578 per year to support a person who is chronically homeless, including costs for emergency shelters, healthcare, and law enforcement. In contrast, preventing homelessness permanently through early intervention costs, on average, \$2,000. In 2023, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States mobilized \$60 million in emergency financial assistance to prevent evictions and keep people housed. Every dollar invested in prevention saves up to five dollars in costs associated with homelessness. And keeping individuals and families housed promotes healthier, more stable communities.

In addition to your financial gift, I ask for you to pray for our Vincentians and for all those neighbors we serve. Pray that we will find the poor where they abide, that we can help them, and that God will bless our work. While financial assistance is important, serving our neighbors personally witnesses to God's love for them. God bless you for your kindness and consideration.

Thank you for your very generous gift of \$1,000 on check number 11879 dated November 30, 2024, to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which will be designated to provide emergency financial aid to the vulnerable in our community. Gratefully yours in Christ,

Joseph Cook Executive Director St. Vincent de Paul Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for the cards, condolences, and especially the hugs embracing me after the death of my sister Mary Ann. The white rose on the altar was especially thoughtful. Your kindness was very much appreciated.



Dee Russell

"Team work makes the dream work."

Dear Bethlehem UCC,

Thank you for being a part of CNOY 2025. Your warmth and kindness truly lit up the chilly evening and made a heartfelt difference in our community. Together we've shown that even the coldest nights can bring our community closer and foster hope for those who need it most. We hope to see you at CNOY 2026.

With heartfelt thanks,

Erica McMichael Development, United Caring Services Dear Bethlehem United Church of Christ,

The McCutchanville Garden Club really enjoyed having its February 3 meeting in your Welcoming Area. It is a beautiful, comfortable, welcoming environment, and your



kitchen is just perfect. Our club is lucky to have members Catie Carl, Marlys Blalock, and Jane Koch who can make it possible for us to meet there. I think we have even more of your members in our Garden Club, too.

We would like to make a donation to your church as a token of our appreciation for your "being there" and being so generous with your facility.

Dee Dee Hewins Treasurer, McCutchenville Garden Club

UNDIE SUNDAYS

Amazing - Wonderful - Record Breaking - Outstanding

Thank you for an all-church effort! We were able to deliver to Hangers a total of 2,221 items from our Undie Sundays drive. We collected over 100 more items than last year. The staff at Hangers was overwhelmed. Thank you to the Eosin Class for coordinating this project and counting the items. And a huge thank you to the classes and individuals that bought items or had us shop for them. Bethlehem is such a pillar of community support.

Thank you!

Pam & Lino (Wiseman)

Christian Education, I'm taking this opportunity to thank you thank you for supporting our work of bringing the Word of God to elementary students in the E



Through the generosity of donors like you, Weekday is serving over 800 students at 23 public elementary schools and Joshua Academy. The program is for 3rd and 4th graders who have a weekly lesson in our WCE mobile classrooms. This year we've also piloted a program for 5th grade students in two of our schools. We start with the basics-learning the books of the Bible and how to look up verses in the Bible - and then proceed to teaching God's Word, including the Fruits of the Spirit and the Armor of God. As a Christmas gift this year, the children received brand new Bibles to take home and hopefully share with their families.

We have been blessed to be able to do this work in our community for over 80 years!

Thank you so much for your support. Please keep our ministry and these students and their families in your prayers.

Very truly yours,

Karen H. Bryan Member of the Board of Directors

The Bethlehem STAR

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the generous donation for the Lincoln Food Pantry. We have many students and their families that struggle with food insecurity. This donation will directly



support several of them. Our staff continually work to keep the pantry stocked and available for those in need. It's a blessing to be able to assemble a cart of groceries for a family when they need it most.

We are grateful for the kind donation from Bethlehem United Church of Christ!

Sincerely,

Tijuanna Tolliver Principal Lincoln School



The Church Council welcomes everyone to attend its monthly Council Chats, which are held on the last Sunday of each month to address any questions or concerns. Our next Chat will be Sunday, April 27, in the fellowship hall.

Directory Update

New email address Lino Wiseman Contact office





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.