

The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past – Faith in Our Future

August 2025

Sunday School Rally Day & Church Picnic

AUGUST 17

Sunday School for all ages – 9:00 am
Worship – 10:15 am
Picnic – 11:15 am



Pastor's Perspective



A prayer for back to school:

Dear God,

We find ourselves once more asking "Where did the summer go?"

Parents chase down those last hard-to-find supplies on the list, take inventory of the children's closets in vain hope that something from last spring might still fit, and otherwise busy themselves as resistance to the reality that the kids are another year closer to launch.

Meanwhile, other parents shop for bedspreads and mini fridges alongside their grown-but-not-quite child, navigating the delicate balance of the shifting parent-child dynamic. One minute she's so sure of herself. The next, a roommate hiccup has her coming undone. And Mom and Dad wonder if it's time to step in or stand back and let her work it through herself. (These parents start to long for the days when they couldn't keep the kids in tennis shoes.)

But then she does it.

She sorts it out all on her own.

She is proud, and so are they.

Grandparents wait for pictures from back-to-school night or campus drop off. They reflect on years gone by, pulling out photo albums from times when pictures were not so easily snapped and shared across the country.

What is this feeling: Melancholy? Relief? Gratitude?

God, for each (grand)parent we pray. Give them strength, patience, and wisdom for a new school year.

Teachers set up classrooms and sort supplies. They attend trainings and meetings (and more meetings!). They send letters to their students welcoming them to a new learning community. They make wish lists on

Amazon, and they make dollars stretch, spending more of their own than they'll admit. They wrestle with technology—Blackboard, Class Dojo, whatever's the "next new thing".

They review the class list. They've heard rumors about one student—"He'll give you a run for your money." (They secretly think, "I bet I can handle him!"). Suddenly, *déjà vu!* "Wait, I had her father in class!" The years go by so fast.

Other teachers feel the shift in the atmosphere—"It's back to school time!" But they are retired now. They have served their community and their students. Look at what a difference they have made! These teachers don't set alarms or review lesson plans. What is this feeling: Melancholy? Relief? Gratitude?

God, for each teacher we pray. Give them strength, patience, and wisdom for a new school year.

Some children choose first-day-of-school outfits and the right fit from Shoe Carnival. They count out glue sticks and place them in the cart.

Other children aren't shopping for new. They count on a trip to Hangers and wait with Mom and Dad in line at back-to-school giveaways hoping to get what they need.

Some children are excited to see their friends, while other children fear another school year of not fitting in.

Some children lament, "I don't want summer to end!" Others excitedly return, because they know at school they will be safe and fed and loved.

Other students aren't children anymore. They are taking their first steps into adulthood, anxious to prove themselves, but also anxious about all the changes.

What is this feeling? Fear? Courage? Growth?

God, for each student we pray. Give them strength, patience, and wisdom for a new school year.

Lord, bless this coming school year. Keep our classrooms safe and help us all to grow.

Amen



Vortex Giving: Kids Fueling Change

The Children and Youth Ministry Team (CYMT) is excited to introduce an interactive and educational project—*Vortex Giving*—to engage children and youth (toddlers through 12th grade) in hands-on giving. Through the installation of a **Vortex Coin**

Funnel, we will create a fun, visible, and meaningful way for young people to donate their change and learn the joy and impact of generosity.

Our Goals:

- Teach children and youth the value of giving.
- Encourage thoughtful decision-making around charitable giving.
- Foster community, compassion, and leadership in our young people.
- Support causes chosen *by* the kids, *for* the community.

How It Works:

Coin Funnel Installation: The Vortex Coin Funnel will be located in the basement children's wing most of the time. It is on wheels so we can move it for special events or projects. Kids and kids-at-heart can drop their offering in the funnel anytime they are in the building.

Collective Giving: Over time, coins will accumulate. Children and youth will be encouraged to bring in donations regularly.

Discernment & Decision-Making: Once a target amount is raised (e.g., monthly or quarterly), children and youth will participate in a guided process to:

- Learn about various charities or causes (local, national, or global)
- Discuss their values and priorities
- Vote on where the money should go

Giving Ceremony and Blessing: Each donation cycle will culminate in a

Continued



moment of celebration and announcement during worship—a chance for children to share what they chose and why and an opportunity to pray over the organization we are supporting. This summer we have already collected for Bosse’s Constructed Creations and Habitat for Humanity.

We hope this project will help children of all ages understand that no gift is too small and that they have the power to make a difference. We pray it will help build lifelong values of generosity, discernment, and community engagement in our youth.



BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL

We look forward to welcoming students back to Sunday School on Sunday, August 17, at 9:00 am. Our children will be divided by grade level as follows:

Nursery	Randi Wink-Bowman
Pre K and K	Alex Hoffman and Judy Kattmann
1st-6th	All 1 st -6 th graders will meet in the 1 st -3 rd grade room each week. We will have our main lesson together and then divide into age groups for some of our activities/discussions. Mrs. Margaret will lead this class with help from Paula Courtney, Jackie Kuhn and Dee Carithers.
7th-12th	Niki T aylor and Mike Slade will lead our youth Sunday School class in the youth room.

We are SO blessed to have a dedicated, experienced, and enthusiastic team of teachers who are committed to providing quality lessons, fellowship, and faith formation for our students each week. I am so incredibly proud of our Sunday School program and encourage you to make Sunday School a priority for your family each week. If you have any questions about Sunday School or any of our children and youth programming, please don’t hesitate to contact me, Margaret Eberhart.

Adult Sunday School

Eosin Sunday School - Eosin Sunday School class meets in the northwest corner of the Fellowship Hall. We are an adult group that discusses the application of Biblical teachings to contemporary issues in our lives. This year we will be using themes for discussions from some UCC Daily Devotional writings and writings from the book, *When We Don't Know the Length of the Race* by Rev. David Owen. We are a relaxed group where everyone is welcome. Leader: Debbie Havens dkhavens49@gmail.com.

Motley Crew - In the Motley Crew group, we're happy to take in any and all. Our discussions cover a variety of topics, and while we don't always stay on track, we are consistent in caring for each other and the church. Most of us are parents of school-aged kids as well. If you are constantly on the go, doing your best, ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work when the church needs help, and completely unreliable in making it to Sunday School on time, this might be the class for you. In typical fashion, we have no idea what we'll be studying in Sunday School this fall, but we'll pull our act together at some point. Join us in the Motley Crew room! Leader: Jordan French jordan.r.french@gmail.com.

Open Door - Most people come to the Open Door class without any in-depth Bible background at all. We try to concentrate on critical reading and understanding of the Bible and application of the Word to our lives. God's Word is powerful and full of meaning. We try to help each other understand it and live it. We meet at 9:00 in one of the small breakout rooms off the youth space. We would love it if you would join us. Leader: Andy Ozete aozete@gmail.com.

YAC - The YAC class, which was once the Young Adult Class, still enjoys welcoming all newcomers, even if "young" no longer typifies most of its members! This class explores the influence of current events on one's faith journey, and how cultural, economic, and political trends impact efforts to follow the teachings of Jesus. The group meets in the library adjoining the Fellowship Hall on Level 3. Leader: Steve Worthington stevesusanworthington@gmail.com.

A Note from The Green Team

“It isn’t easy being green.”
– Kermit’s Song, Sesame Street

We are a diverse congregation with lots of different ideas. That’s good. Even better is knowing what unifies us. One of our values is that we are to be stewards of the earth that God has created and entrusted to us. It is in that spirit that the Green Team shares the effects on climate-related tax provisions in the recently passed One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA).

Effective September 30th, the consumer tax credit of up to \$7,500 for new electric cars and \$4,000 for used cars is eliminated.

All funds from the 2022 IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) for communities to increase energy efficiency and climate resiliency are being eliminated.

Instead of 9 years from now (2034 under the IRA), the residential tax credit of 30% for solar, batteries, insulation, energy efficient windows, geothermal heat pumps, high efficiency heating and cooling systems, and similar items is eliminated on December 31 of this year.

The Direct Pay option for nonprofits and governmental entities to get an equivalent benefit to a tax credit will be affected by the cutting of various clean energy tax credits.

It repeals the increase in royalty rates the government receives for oil and gas leases on federal lands from 16.6% to 12.5% and on coal leases from 12.5% to 7%, reducing taxpayer funds and increasing profits for oil, gas and coal companies.

It reinstates fossil fuel lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and gives the majority of the royalties to the State of Alaska instead of all American taxpayers.

Dreaming God's Dream

NO GIFT TOO SMALL, NO DREAM TOO BIG.

The Stewardship Team looks forward to kicking off our campaign this month, and as part of that, we'd like to share with you some statistics that we found informative about the patterns of financial giving at Bethlehem. There are a lot of numbers included here, but we want to draw your attention to a couple of items:

First, we are a generous church and our combined efforts fund Bethlehem's vital ministries. 241 Giving Units contributed almost \$460,000 in 2024. Thank you for this support!

Second, there is a disparity between the giving units and the pledging units. It is one of the goals of the Stewardship Team to help move those 162 unpledged units to pledged units. Pledging helps our budget team make responsible decisions around how to allocate resources for effective ministry. We will be talking more about how to pledge over the next couple of months.

Third, fewer than fifty percent of our giving units utilize online giving. We know that many prefer to give in more traditional ways (and that's fine!), but for those who would like to learn more about online giving or simply need help figuring out how to set it up, we want to make available the opportunity to make giving automatic for those interested.

Stay tuned for more information from the Stewardship Team in the days ahead, and mark your calendars now for October 4-5, which will be our Consecration Weekend.

continued

2024 Statistics

Church Membership: 502

Giving Units: 241

Pledge Units: 79

Unpledged units: 162

Pledgers who give online: 34 units or 43% of units

Range of pledges:

\$1-\$600: 5

\$1,200: 9

\$1,300-\$1820: 12

\$2,000-\$3,500: 22

\$3,600: 8

\$3,900-\$5,000: 10

\$5,200: 5

\$6,000-\$8,400: 5

\$10,000-\$10,440: 2

\$15,600: 1



Average pledge: \$3,412.47

Median pledge: \$2,600.00

Amount pledged, but not given: \$29,337.06 (spread over 25 units;
9 of those over \$1,000, two \$5,000+)

Amount given over pledged amount: \$10,854.60 (spread over 26 units;
4 of those over \$1,000)

Amount of money collected in total: \$459,888.20

Amount of money collected online: \$137,672.27 or 30%

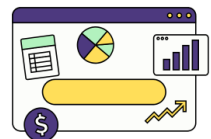
2025 Statistics - A Preview

Pledge units: 77

Pledged amount: \$309,854

Pledged units who have given so far: 75

Pledged amount given so far: \$163,268.88



Save the dates!
Consecration Weekend October 4 & 5

Rally Day & All-Church Picnic

Join Us for a Special Sunday of Celebration and Fellowship!

Sunday, August 17, immediately following worship, we're kicking off our Annual All-Church Picnic with a joyful celebration of our Children and Youth Sunday School classes!

Children's Celebration Procession



Following worship, **children should meet Mrs. Margaret** in the Sunday School wing. **Adults are invited to form a cheering tunnel** from the children's wing basement doors to the pavilion. Children will be announced by age group and will walk through the tunnel as we cheer them on their way to the picnic!

All-Church Picnic Details

The church will provide:

- Fried chicken
- Drinks
- Paper products



Please bring:

- A dish to share (**drop it off in the church kitchen before worship**)
- A lawn chair, if possible (limited tables and chairs will be available)

Accessibility:

Need help getting to the picnic area? A golf cart will be available at the Welcome Area doors to assist.

Freewill Offering:

A freewill offering will be collected to help offset picnic expenses.

The Michael P. Schmitt and Lorena K. Schmitt Music Scholarships

The Michael P. Schmitt and Lorena K. Schmitt Music Scholarships will be awarded for the year 2025.

Qualifications:

- Applicant must be a member or regularly attend Bethlehem United Church of Christ.
- Applicant must show an interest and aptitude for instrumental or vocal music.
- Applicant must be willing to share his/her talent with the church when requested.

Applications are available outside the church office. Please contact the church office if you have any questions.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

(812) 867-2497

church@bethlehemucc.org

Deadline for submitting applications is August 31, 2025.

Please send application to:

ATTN: MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

6400 Oak Hill Road, Evansville, IN 47725



The Memorial and Special Gifts Committee was thrilled to award Annarae Sansing with this year's Connie and August Koch Memorial Scholarship in recognition of the generosity of those who came before us, whose foresight is Bethlehem's future. The \$1,000 Scholarship is given each year to a student pursuing a course of instruction leading to a degree in a health or education-related field. Congratulations, Annarae!

Thank you to sixth grader Jeremy Dix, who worked alongside his grandpa, Bob Kolb (Financial Secretary) counting money this week. Jeremy counted the contributions to the Giving Vortex for Bosse's Constructed Creations. Stay tuned for a grand total!



On Thursday evenings, it's great to have a full Conference Room with 23 people participating in the *Life Worth Living* Study!

Pastor Emily acknowledged she doesn't have all the answers and was willing to get a bit messy and have fun with the rest of the kids and adults at the VBS foam party.





The Habitat for Humanity committee is pleased to report the outcome of the BBQ Dinner, Ice Cream Social, Cruise In, and Silent Auction held on July 13, 2025. We were able to raise \$13,800, with all funds going to Habitat for Humanity of Evansville. This amount will allow the next Habitat home to start groundbreaking this fall instead of next spring.

A Big Thank You to the awesome contributions from everyone involved from the overwhelming support of the volunteers and the Habitat Committee, whose work and commitment went into making last Sunday as successful as it has become. A Big Thank You for everyone who donated ice cream, a delicious dessert, an item to the silent auction, or just came by and enjoyed a meal. This was truly a day of fellowship from all parts of Evansville.

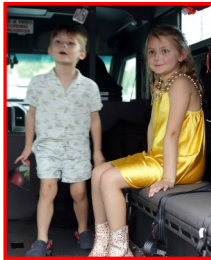
We would also like to recognize the volunteers from St. Paul's UCC who supported our event, as well as the members of the car community for sharing their vehicles in the car show. A special thanks to the firemen and sheriffs' teams that allowed our church family to explore their tools and vehicles.

Hopefully you had a chance to meet Deysheona Sherman and her daughter, the young woman who received ownership of the last UCC/DOC Habitat home.

Social Spectacular!







ETSA Civil Rights Study and Trip

Meeting times: Every-other Thursday 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. at Bethlehem UCC beginning August 28

Books: *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith and *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby

Trip itinerary

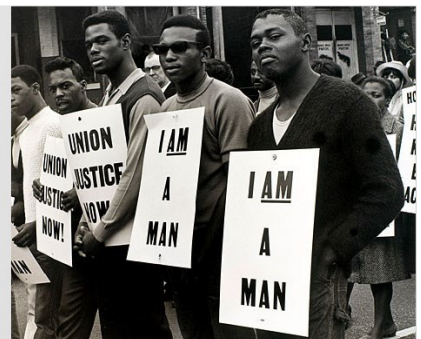
- April 14, 2026: Depart 7:00 a.m. for Birmingham to see the Civil Rights Institute and 16th Street Baptist Church. After our tours, drive on to Montgomery, where we will spend three nights.
- April 15-16, 2026: We will visit the three sites of the Legacy Museum.
- April 17, 2026: Depart at 7:00 a.m. for the Whitney Plantation. After our tour, we will drive part way home, likely spending the night in Jackson, MS.
- April 18, 2026: Drive the rest of the way home.

Cost: TBD Please do not let cost dissuade you from participating!

Sign up using either the QR code, the link, or by contacting Emily Slade at 812-867-2497 or emily@bethlehemucc.org

<https://forms.gle/QKwZKBUmfobfJNow9>

Deadline: Sign up by August 7 to have your books ordered for you.



BRIGHTEN A LIFE With a Window Sponsorship!

United Caring Services strives to create a welcoming and safe environment for individuals experiencing homelessness. With 98 windows that urgently need to be replaced due to extreme deterioration (3 have recently fallen to the ground from the 3rd and 4th floors), your support will not only enhance the facility, but also provide a safer, brighter, more uplifting atmosphere for its guests.



Each replacement window costs \$500. Currently, sponsorship has been obtained for 60 of the 98 windows that need to be replaced, with 38 more needed to complete the project. Bethlehem members and groups have already provided funding for **11 windows!**

The Outreach Team would like to challenge individuals, groups of friends, and church groups to bring Bethlehem's total to **20 window sponsorships**. Checks can be mailed directly to United Caring Services, P.O. Box 1071, Evansville, IN 47706. Be sure to write "window sponsorship" on the memo line and let the church office know of your gift. All donors will be recognized on Bethlehem's own "wall of windows".



The Bethlehem Chancel and Handbell choirs welcome anyone interested in joining one or both groups. Kick-off is Thursday, August 21, at 6:00 pm at Turoni's on Weinbach. Please RSVP to Gerri Klass at 812-430-7522.

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 and online sign-up instructions at bethlehemucc.org. To streamline the process, please sign up online if at all possible or contact Cindy Carwile at ckcarwile@gmail.com. If you prefer a paper form, they are available in the vestibule (office entrance open 24/7), church office hallway, Welcoming Area, children and youth entrance, and narthex.

Available dates in the coming months:

August 17, 24, 31
September 7, 21
October 5, 12



Financial Recap

June General Account

	2025	2024
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 132,912.94	\$ 182,333.73
Monthly Pledge Deposits	42,891.64	43,567.21
Monthly Other Deposits	1,277.21	700.81
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(41,600.13)	(43,505.26)
Monthly Other Disbursements	-	2,159.22
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 135,481.66</u>	<u>\$ 185,255.71</u>

YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 170,535.44	\$ 182,223.60
Pledge Deposits	219,070.55	217,769.47
Other Deposits	9,903.84	7,822.42
Operating Disbursements	(264,626.19)	(254,362.21)
Other Disbursements	598.02	31,802.43
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 135,481.66</u>	<u>\$ 185,255.71</u>



Did you know that folks from Bethlehem volunteer with other churches in the Evansville Tri-State Association four times annually at Sister Joanna's Table at St. Paul's Episcopal Church? This past Saturday, Pastor Emily, Chris Champion, Emily Westrich, Chase Cline, and Shirley Starks helped prepare, serve, and clean-up lunch. It is great to serve alongside our sister churches in the ESTA!

CHURCH COUNCIL

- The Stewardship Committee will be rolling out this year's stewardship campaign in August. Pledge cards will be mailed out mid-September, with Consecration Weekend scheduled for October 4 & 5. More information will be shared over the next few weeks.
- The Council approved our partnership with the Red Cross for Bethlehem UCC to be used as an emergency shelter. These partnerships allow the Red Cross to utilize church facilities as congregate shelters, providing a safe haven for individuals and families displaced by events like hurricanes, tornadoes, or floods.
- We encourage you to bring any questions or concerns to our next Council Chat that will be held on Sunday, August 31.



Dear Bethlehem friends,

Many thanks to those who called, sent cards and prayed for me during my recovery from hip surgery. It's comforting to have such a caring church family.

Sincerely,
Jane Jackson

Dear Bethlehem,

Thank you so much for supporting me for so long! I love being able to come to church and see everyone; it brings me a lot of joy. Thank you for the gift. I really appreciate it and will be using it to buy dorm room items.

Audrey (Kuhlenschmidt)

Thanks for all the cards and prayers during my recent downtime. It worked! My new hip feels great and I've been give a "GO" by the therapists and Dr. Metzger.

John Small



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.



Directory Update

Call 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.***