



The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past – Faith in Our Future

November 2025



¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Pastor's Perspective

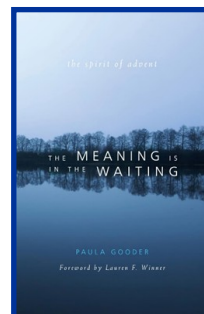


I want to offer a sincere thank you for all the kind notes and words of encouragement during Pastor Appreciation Month. The reception and gift this past Sunday were unexpected, but so thoughtful. It is a privilege to serve this congregation, and I'm so grateful to be in ministry with all of you. I am especially grateful to serve alongside Pastor Doug and such a dedicated staff. The appreciation is both appreciated and mutual!!!

Advent begins at the end of this month, and I am excited that we will be kicking things off with a special morning of worship. This year, our annual children's program will be the launch of the Advent season! On November 30, make plans to join in the Fellowship Hall for breakfast at 8:30 a.m., then move with us into the Welcoming Area at 9:00 a.m. for the kids' program. At 9:35 a.m., we will dismiss to the sanctuary for music by harpist Emily Fife, whom we welcome again this year as our special guest. Worship will include the musical gifts of many of Bethlehem's own musicians as well. It will be a wonderful morning that will help us begin preparing our hearts for Christmas Day. I do hope you'll make plans to join us!

During the rest of Advent, my sermons will be based on my favorite Advent devotion book, *The Meaning is in the Waiting* by Paula Gooder. The book is divided into four parts, and my preaching schedule is below, corresponding to the chapters in the book.

For those interested in a bit deeper engagement, I have purchased some used copies of the book that I'll place around



the church for you to take. If you'd like to reimburse the church, the cost is \$5. Alternately, you can purchase the digital version from Amazon for ~\$7.

Advent Worship Schedule (Sunday services)

November 30: Music Sunday

December 7: Called to Wait: Abraham and Sarah, Our Ancestors in the Faith

December 14: Waiting for the Day of the Lord: The Prophets

December 21: Waiting Between the Times: John the Baptist

December 24: A Life of Waiting: Mary

I look forward to another meaningful Advent season together! But we also have 29 days of November before Advent starts, and you won't be surprised to learn that there are many great opportunities for ministry, worship, and fellowship this month. Continue reading the Star to learn more about events like Totenfest, Brian Newton's ordination, Hanging of the Greens, and more!



On November 1 and 2, we will be celebrating Totenfest, when we remember those who we have lost this past year. During these services, you will have the opportunity to light a candle to remember your own loved ones as we give thanks to God for all the saints who have shaped and guided us.



This year we'll be trying something a little different as we approach Advent. Rather than waiting until December to teach the Christmas stories, we'll begin our study in November. Our hope is to capture the children's attention before the busyness of the season sets in, and to help prepare their hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus. Beginning early will allow us to focus more deeply on the messages of Advent—and leave more room for fun in December!

WHAT WE'RE TEACHING THE CHILDREN

FOLLOW THE STAR: A 4-Week Series from the Gospels on Christmas

SERIES OVERVIEW: Many families hit the road during the Christmas season, whether it's to visit loved ones or take a much-needed break. It's a time-honored tradition—one that might even be traced back to the first Christmas when a bright star dropped a pin on a special location to guide people to the birthplace of the savior. In this 4-week series, kids will learn that **God gives people to guide us, God gives hope to guide us, God gives a Savior to guide us, and God gives direction to guide us.**



[DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH'S PARENT DEVOTIONAL](#)

WHAT WE'RE TEACHING THE YOUTH

AFTER YOU: A 4-Week Series from the New Testament on Loving Others



SERIES OVERVIEW: We all know God wants us to love others—it's one of the most important things Jesus taught. But let's be honest... actually doing it? That's not always easy, especially when life feels busy or people aren't easy to love. In this 4-week series from the New Testament, we'll explore how Jesus shows us what loving others really looks like. He challenges us to move away from the world's "me first" attitude and embrace his "after you" message as we follow his example. We'll learn that Jesus shows us how to notice others' needs, Jesus asks us to care for each other, God's Spirit helps us serve others, and God invites us to share our joy.

[CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S STUDENT DEVOTIONAL](#)

November 23 - Youth Special Project

The youth will be staying after church to help with a special project! We'll be painting wooden Advent wreaths that will be distributed to families the following week after the Children's Advent Kick-Off program.

Each Sunday in Advent, children will receive a candle during Children's Chat to add to their wreath.

Please RSVP to Mrs. Margaret if you're able to stay and help paint after worship!



November 30 - Children's Advent Kick-Off Program

The children and youth will be sharing their musical and speaking talents with the Adult Sunday School classes and congregation on Sunday, November 30. We'll begin with breakfast in the Fellowship Hall at 8:30 a.m., then move to the Welcome Area at 9:00 for the children's presentation.

continued

Any child or youth is invited to sign up to sing, play an instrument, read, or share a Christmas-themed talent. Please use the Google Form below to **sign up by Sunday, November 9**. Please complete a form for each child or youth participating.

SHARE YOUR
GIFTS

[Share Your Gifts Sign Up](#)

Youth Serve at UCS followed by Friendsgiving Dinner

The youth will serve at UCS on Sunday, November 30. After serving dinner at the shelter, we'll head to Turoni's for a Friendsgiving Dinner together. Please let Mrs. Margaret know if you're able to attend.



Attn: Bethlehem Committee Chairs

I have had very few responses from Committee Chairs, and I am beginning the process of assembling the data we need for the 2025 Annual Report. Please take a few minutes of your time and prayerfully share the work your committee, social group, or Sunday School class has been doing this year. **If you are in doubt about whether or not you owe the office your input, please don't hesitate to call or email me.**

Committee Roster (for 2026, who's on the committee and who will be the committee leader) are due to me no later than **November 15**. To access the form, [Click Here](#)

Committee Annual Reports are due on **December 5**. To access the form, [Click Here](#)

Thank you in advance!

Patty Oglesby

patty@bethlehemucc.org



Stewardship Report

We are off to a good start!

For reference, last year in 2024, 77 families or individuals pledged \$309,854.00. Bethlehem received an additional \$150,034.00 in non-pledged giving, bringing our 2024 giving to \$459,888.00

As of October 20, 2025, 77 families or individuals have pledged \$328,108.00, an increase of \$18,254.00 or almost 6%. We will likely receive a few more pledge cards in the coming days, so we expect these numbers to grow.

Why is all of this important to our ministry?

As you may be aware, we set a budget for 2025 of \$532,587.00. Bethlehem is currently on pace to have total giving in 2025 of roughly \$450,000.00. If trends continue, this represents a deficit of roughly \$82,000.00

By pledging, Bethlehem's Budget Committee can better estimate total giving to our church to support our ministries.

So, let's finish strong!

For next year,

- > consider pledging for 2026
- > consider increasing your pledge or giving amount in 2026

For this year and our remaining two months, please make sure you meet your pledge (almost one in three pledge families or individuals fail to meet their pledge amount, representing almost \$20,000).

Continued

Give more than your pledge amount (over one in three families or individuals exceed their pledge amount, representing almost \$11,000.00).

Consider making a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA (a tax advantage to you), or gifting appreciated stock directly to the church (avoids capital gains).

Drop something extra in the collection plate.

Again, thank you for your generosity and supporting the ministries at Bethlehem.

The Stewardship Ministry Team

2026 Online Pledge Form

For those who haven't turned in a 2026 pledge card and prefer an online option, please click [HERE](#).

Paper copies of the pledge cards are available at church entrances and outside the church office door. Please contact the church office at church@bethlehemucc.org if you wish to have one mailed to you. The completed cards may be placed in the offering plate at worship, deposited in the secured church mailbox located in the vestibule (office entrance), or mailed to the church.



In celebration of Pastor Appreciation Month, we gathered to honor Pastors Emily and Doug for their unwavering faithfulness, devotion, and love for God, Bethlehem, and everyone who enters our doors.



Constitution and By-Laws Informational Session

On Sunday, November 9, after the 10:15 a.m. church service, we will hold an informational session about proposed changes to our Bethlehem Constitution and By-Laws in the downstairs conference room.

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.



Altar Flowers Update

After serving the altar flower ministry so well for the last three years, Cindy Carwile has formally passed the organizing reins to Carol Kolb.

This organizer change brings with it a new calendar format on our website to view available dates, along with a redesigned signup form. We believe this new format will make it easier to complete your flower requests. If you prefer a paper form, they are always available in the vestibule (office entrance open 24/7), church office hallway, Welcoming Area, children and youth entrance, and narthex.

It's easy to be an altar flower donor to celebrate an anniversary or birthday or remember a loved one. Prices remain with \$40 for two vases and \$35 for one centerpiece. To view available dates click [HERE](#). To complete sign up for a weekend, click [HERE](#).

For future altar flower needs, please contact Carol Kolb with any questions at carolrkolb@yahoo.com.



The Couples Small group (Steedmans, Newtons, Lukers and Carithers), with the dinner menu, served 94 first servings at UCS.

Join us as we celebrate the
Ordination
of
Brian Newton

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

2:00 PM

AT

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

6400 OAK HILL ROAD, EVANSVILLE, IN

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW AT BETHLEHEM

Clergy are invited to robe for procession.



Marvin Harry Sunderman, 87, of Evansville, Indiana, passed away October 18, 2025. He was born November 24, 1937 in Duff, Indiana to Harry and Alma (Hilgeman) Sunderman.



Marvin graduated from Lockyear Business College in the late 1950's and went on to work for Marathon Oil in Terre Haute, Indiana. Upon returning to Evansville, he started his employment at Old National Bank in 1966, where he spent the next 32 years until retiring in 1998 as the Vice-President and Trust Officer, Chief Financial Officer of Old National Bank Trust Division. Marvin joined Evansville North Civitan Club in 1975 and was a member for over 50 years. He held positions in the Civitan Club as President and Treasurer multiple times as well as being named Regional Treasurer for Midwest District. He also participated in numerous community projects through the Civitan Club. He was an active member of Bethlehem United Church of Christ since 1967 where he served as Elder, was part of the bell choir and worked on numerous committees. Additionally, he generously supported many charitable and non-profit organizations.

Marvin was preceded in death by his first wife, Sara Sunderman; second wife, Beverly Plymire Sunderman; son, Kent Sunderman; stepson, Robert Plymire (surviving wife, Brenda); his three sisters, Alma I. Small (Herman), Irene Conrad (Ray) and Selma Mork.

He is survived by his stepdaughters, Donna Nelson (Harold) and Cathy Burns (Barry, deceased); and stepson, Charles Plymire (Rebecca); six grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren; and 5 nieces and nephews: Beverly Lichlyter (Bob, deceased), Donna Gelhausen (LeRoy), Rayetta Crabtree (Dan, deceased), David Small (Sheryl) and Herman Small, Jr. (Janis).

A funeral service was held at 12:00 p.m. Friday, October 24, 2025 at Bethlehem United Church of Christ, 6400 Oak Hill Road, Evansville, IN 47725, officiated by Rev. Emily Slade. Burial took place in the church cemetery following the funeral service. Friends and family visited at the church from 10:00 a.m. until service time.



OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES



Tri-State Food Bank



The next collection of canned fruit for the Tri-State Food Bank will be **November 8 & 9**. This is an ongoing project that is being coordinated with the weekends communion is served. 133 cans were donated in September, and 179 in October! Please plan to pick up a few cans of fruit each time you grocery shop. Thank you for your generosity!



Cake Mixes for the Rescue Mission



The Evansville Rescue Mission has requested donations of cake mixes for their annual Thanksgiving food basket program. Cake mixes will be collected through Sunday, November 16, and may be placed in designated boxes in the office entrance vestibule and Welcoming Area. So far, 63 items have been collected. Can we reach 100 or beyond? Thank you for sharing!

Fish Fry

FUN

With great success at the annual Fish Fry, over 400 meals were served in three short hours! Proceeds will benefit our local community through the Tri-State Food Bank and globally through the GATHER Network.





Save the date! November 23



Do you love the way the sanctuary looks at Christmas time? It takes many hands to get it there! Please plan to stick around for a bit after worship on November 23 to help with the Hanging of the Greens! Any and all are welcome to bring in the Advent season!

It was a sweet celebration for Doris Oglesby, as church family and friends gathered to help celebrate her 99 years around the sun!



December/January STAR Newsletter Materials Deadline

November 17

2025 is quickly drawing to a close. Please submit any articles or content to be included in the December/January edition of the STAR newsletter no later than Tuesday, November 17, to publishing@bethlehemucc.org.



**Habitat for Humanity
Hacienda Giveback Day
December 1, 2025**

Join us on Monday, December 1, and eat for a cause at all Evansville Hacienda Restaurants for a Giveback Day! When you dine in, carry-out, or buy gift cards ALL DAY from open to close, Hacienda will generously donate 20% of the food and gift card sales to support Habitat for Humanity of Evansville - **just be sure to show the official Giveback coupon or mention to the wait staff you are there the Habitat for Humanity giveback when you order either dine in or paying for carry out.**

What a great way to remember teachers, neighbors, relatives, delivery persons, or that special someone during the holidays with a gift card from Hacienda. Have an office party and need a small gift that everyone will love?

Sales of gift cards are included in the giveback donation. Gift cards cannot be used to pay for meals towards the giveback donation.

What a great way to help a non profit with your favorite margarita with chips and salsa! That's right! - Tacos, margaritas and even gift cards can help support families build a future!

Your support is helping Habitat for Humanity of Evansville and families find a brighter future through home ownership.



Group: Habitat for Humanity EVV
 Date: December 1, 2025
 Location: Citywide

You must receive this token from your organization prior to your event. Distribution of this token on Hacienda property will disqualify the organization from receiving any proceeds.

Don't have time to eat out? Pick up a Hacienda gift card or Fiesta-To-Go order. They count towards the fundraiser.

Restaurant Phone Number _____

GIFT CARDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED TO MAKE PAYMENT FOR YOUR PURCHASE WITH THIS TOKEN

“Think Globally; Act Locally,” is a phrase that can be applied to a host of issues. Since the 1970’s it has been most often associated with the environmental movement. It is attributed to Patrick Geddes, a Scottish urban planner and conservationist, who coined the phrase in 1915. Geddes took a minimalist approach to conservationist practices. He would survey a community and select a few things to change, like adding some green space as a park. His theory involved working incrementally on an issue, starting small, slowly growing. There is an intuitive quality to this approach.



Scientists tell us we have already reached the tipping point for the coral reefs. Surging temperatures worldwide have pushed coral reef ecosystems into a state of widespread decline. Bleaching and diebacks have affected 80% of the world’s coral, according to the journal “Nature.”

While we can’t do much about that global system, here are some things we can do locally:

Unplug electronic devices that “instant on” but you seldom use. A good place to start is the guest room.

Have your HVAC system checked out. As you move from cool to heat, lower your nighttime setting by 5 to 8 degrees. Saves the planet; saves you money.

Join Tri-State Creation Cares. Its mission is “to promote good stewardship of this Earth to ensure a sustainable and thriving planet for our children, grandchildren and future generations of all species. You can find out more at <https://www.tristatecreationcare.org/>

Conserve water by considering what you eat. A pound of beef takes 1800

continued

gallons; a pound of pork - 718; a pound of chicken – 520; a pound of soybeans 206. How about trying to go “Meatless on Mondays.” This is an idea that was rolled out at Bethlehem a few years ago. We don’t think it got much traction. We’d loved to be proven wrong. Maybe now is the time. Have you checked beef prices lately?

That is enough for now. Geddes suggested working incrementally as we think globally and act locally. Still, we’d appreciate your suggestions. We’ll pass them along as we continue to be a community of stewards of God’s earth.

The Green Team

Financial Recap

September General Account

	2025	2024
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 121,472.99	\$ 158,133.53
Monthly Pledge Deposits	42,419.34	45,267.21
Monthly Other Deposits	1,455.91	1,037.34
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(38,618.72)	(36,752.09)
Monthly Other Disbursements	121.06	1,699.60
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 126,850.58</u>	<u>\$ 169,385.59</u>

YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 170,535.44	\$ 182,223.60
Pledge Deposits	314,313.25	333,567.35
Other Deposits	23,364.42	10,425.66
Operating Disbursements	(388,270.95)	(376,330.02)
Other Disbursements	6,908.42	19,499.00
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 126,850.58</u>	<u>\$ 169,385.59</u>



Bethlehem UCC

Thank you for offering your space so we can prep for the fall festival. We appreciate you!

Evansville Day School PTO

Dear Rev. Emily,

From all of us at Habitat for Humanity of Evansville - thank you! Your recent gift of \$7,000.00 means more than words can fully express. It's a generous act of kindness that will have a lasting impact on families right here in our community.

As the leaves begin to turn and we look toward the close of another year, we are filled with gratitude-for you. Because of your support, parents will step into homes that bring peace of mind and safety. Children will have a quiet space to dream, study, and grow. And families who once faced uncertainty will now gather around their own kitchen tables with a sense of belonging and pride.

At Habitat, we know that a home is not just lumber and nails - it is the foundation upon which futures are built. Your gift is helping to make this possible. Together, we are building more than houses; we are cultivating communities rooted in compassion and opportunity.

As we move through this season of thankfulness, we are reminded that every gift, every volunteer hour, and every prayer brings us closer to doubling the number of families we serve. You are part of this life-changing work, and we are honored to count you as a member of our Habitat family.

Dan Douglas
Director of Development
Habitat for Humanity of Evansville



Dear Bethlehem UCC,

Thank you for your generous gift to Back Bay Mission! We are truly grateful for your partnership and your belief in the work we do. Your support of Friends of the Mission ensures we can respond quickly and compassionately to the most urgent needs facing our neighbors along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Because of your generosity (\$853.50), lives are being transformed every day. You are helping families keep the lights on, providing safe shelter to those experiencing homelessness, supporting homeowners working to stay in their homes, and ensuring people have access to food, resources, and hope.

Most of all, your gift helps keep Back Bay Mission a place of welcome for all - a place where everyone who walks through our doors is met with dignity, respect, and the support they deserve.

Thank you for standing with us. We couldn't do this without you, and we - along with the individuals and families we serve - are deeply grateful for your kindness and commitment.

Rev. James Pennington
Executive Director

I extend my thanks to everyone who sent me a card or a note, or who shared words of appreciation during October's occasion of Pastor Appreciation. It was wonderful to visit with many of you at the reception, and it always feels good to know that the work I am doing makes a difference to people and hopefully inspires them along their journey of faith. Thanks again.

Pastor Doug



Dear Bethlehem friends,

I am grateful for all the many ways that so many of you have communicated with me since my cancer recurrence.

I have completed my chemotherapy, but will continue to have ongoing treatments for some time.

Your expressions of love and concern mean more than words can express as I continue on this journey.

With my gratitude,

Linda Gilbert



Shortly before the team departed for Biloxi, MS, Pastor Emily commissioned several of the Back Bay Mission ministry team members ahead of their annual trip.

Directory Update

Please contact church office.



Save the dates!

**cookie
Walk**
Bake & Treat Sale

December 13 & 14
following worship



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 13th, this year. Plan to pick up your pies between 2:00 and 5:30 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 13, between 2:00 and 5:30 PM.

Checks should be made out to Eosin and placed in the Eosin mailbox (2nd floor (church office floor) by the elevator)



December 13 & 14
Lots of bakers, treat
makers, and
shoppers are
needed.

Get your baking sheets ready to make this the best Cookie Walk ever! We will need cookies and treats to make the Cookie Walk a success. Mark your calendars for December 13 & 14 after church. If possible, we would like the goodies by noon on Saturday, December 13. The cost will be \$6.00 a pound, and bakers will get ½ pound free.

To be a volunteer, please email the information below to Patty Geske (psgeske@yahoo.com) or Connie Crab (conniecrab2901@gmail.com) or fill out the form below and place in the Eosin mailbox by the elevator, offering plate, or drop at the church office. Thanks for making this holiday season special with your cookies and/or candy.

COOKIE WALK VOLUNTEER

We welcome makers and bakers of all ages. Please volunteer to make a batch (2 - 3 dozen) of holiday treats.

NAME _____

I plan to make a batch of:

_____ Cookies _____ Candy _____ Specialty item _____

Thank you in advance!



The Altar Guild will again be selling poinsettias to decorate the altar and chancel for Christmas. The cost is **\$15.00 per plant** in a 6 1/2" pot with gold foil cover and will be available in red or white.

The deadline for ordering your plant(s) is Sunday, December 8, and there is no exception to the deadline.

The donor list will be linked in Emily's Edition, available on Sunday, December 21, and on Christmas Eve. Poinsettias can be taken home following the 9:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve. Remaining poinsettias will be used on Sunday, December 28. **Any plants left after the service on December 28 will be discarded.**

You may place your order form and check (or pay online via bethlehemucc.org) in the offering plate, in the Altar Guild box near the office by the second-floor elevator, or email the information to Carol Kolb at carolrkolb@yahoo.com with payment info. Paper copies of this form will be available in the church office vestibule, Welcoming Area, and narthex. We purchase our poinsettias from Steve Worthington's Kiwanis organization, who uses their monies to support various community projects throughout the year.

Name of Donor _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Donor List Wording:

Total Number of Plants ordered _____ Cash _____

Check# _____

COLOR: Red _____ White _____ No Color Preference _____

Orders must be pre-paid. Checks made payable to BETHLEHEM UCC



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.***