

# The Bethlehem STAR

Pride in Our Past – Faith in Our Future

September 2025

## FISH FRY

September 27



# Pastor's Perspective



## The Stewardship Campaign and Giving as a Double Act of Faith

Every three years, clergy in the Indiana Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ must complete six hours of boundary training. It's about as much fun as it sounds. At these meetings, we talk about the challenges of pastoral ministry and how to respond to them in ways that maintain healthy boundaries.

During these trainings, we inevitably spend some time with case studies. While every church context is different, there are recurring themes that show up in every church, so talking through common scenarios with other clergy can be really helpful.



During the recent annual meeting of the IKC, I completed two hours of my required training. The case study my group was assigned was about a stewardship issue: A church struggling to meet its budget was approached by a member with the offer of a gift of \$50,000. The catch was the gift could only be used to hire a new staff position that did not fit with the Church Council's vision for the church.

During our conversation, one of my colleagues brought up that this scenario may reflect a lack of trust in church leadership and a failure in stewardship education.

Her insights got me thinking about how giving to the church is an act of faith—not just in God, but also in the church's leadership. It's a double act of faith! Once your gift lands in the offering plate, its use is out of your hands.

*Continued*

The church family trusts the Church Council, the staff, and other lay leaders to make decisions about those gifts and how they best support the mission of the church. Sometimes, you'll agree with those decisions. Other times, you won't. But giving of our financial resources is one way we commit to our life together as a church family.

So, on behalf of our leadership—in addition to thanking you for the gifts you give, I want to also thank you for the trust you place in them (us) to discern how best to direct the church and its resources.

This month you will receive a letter and pledge card in the mail for 2026. As you prayerfully consider your pledge, I ask that you also pray for the lay leadership and staff, that we might continue to faithfully steward all that is entrusted to us.



### **Sunday School Update – A Joyful Return!**

It was such a joy to welcome children and youth back to Sunday School last month! Here's a look at what's been happening in our classrooms:

*Continued*



### **Preschool Class – Led by Mrs. Alex and Mrs. Judy**

This year's preschool class is full of energy, with many young and enthusiastic boys! After graduating several students last year, Mrs. Alex and Mrs. Judy are excited to nurture this new group. Mrs. Alex is incorporating music and lots of movement into the lessons, bringing the stories to life in an engaging, age-appropriate way. They will be following a modified version of the GROW Curriculum that our older classes use.

### **Elementary Class (1st–6th Grade) – Led by Mrs. Margaret with Mrs. Jackie, Mrs. Paula, and Mrs. Dee**

Our elementary students kicked off the year by learning classroom procedures, exploring our Vortex Giving Project, gaining a better understanding of our worship service, and participating in acolyte training. Starting the Sunday after Labor Day, they will dive into the GROW Curriculum with a study of the book of Daniel.

### **Youth Group – Led by Mrs. Niki and Mr. Mike**

Our youth group celebrated Rally Day with a party for the many August birthdays and a thoughtful discussion on setting priorities. Mrs. Niki used a creative object lesson with dollar bills to represent the hours in a day, helping students visualize how to spend their time wisely and intentionally. The group has now begun a 4-week GROW Curriculum series from the book of Matthew, which explores how the Bible helps us see differently, teaches us how to be like Jesus, reveals God's character, and shows us what is true.

We are so thankful for our dedicated teachers and volunteers, and we're excited for the year ahead!

## Children and Youth Curriculum

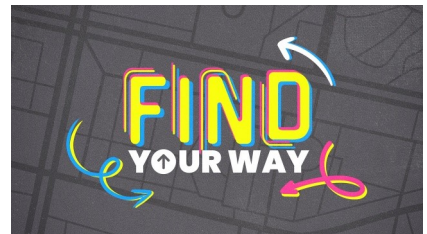
**NOW YOU SEE ME:** A 4-Week Series from the Old Testament on Daniel



**CHILDREN SERIES OVERVIEW:** Magic tricks and illusions have a way of sparking wonder and curiosity. But long before today's magicians, Daniel and his friends stood out during the Babylonian exile. They were wiser than the magicians and astrologers of their time because they looked to God for wisdom. Through their brave actions and wise choices, they showed God's power to everyone around them—no tricks needed! In this 4-week series, kids will learn that **God helps us choose wisely, God is ready to rescue us, God's words show us what to do, and our courage can help others see God.**

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

**FIND YOUR WAY:** A 4-Week Series from Matthew on Spiritual Growth



**YOUTH SERIES OVERVIEW:** Life can feel confusing. We hit moments where we're not sure which way to go, what decision to make, or how to figure things out. Wouldn't it be nice if there was a map that could guide us through life—not just for directions, but for making choices, living life, and knowing God better? If you've ever been there, good news! The Bible is more than an old book—it's a map that helps us find our way. In this 4-week series from the book of Matthew, we'll discover how **the Bible helps us see things differently, shows us how to be like Jesus, reveals what God is like, and teaches us what is true.**

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

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

Natalie Slade will be headed to Washington DC to meet with lawmakers on September 3 at the Capitol! Natalie won this opportunity by being selected as the 2025 Climate Hope art contest winner back in April. We are excited to share with you about the experience upon her return.



## UPDATES FROM OUTREACH

### UCS Windows Update

Good news! UCS has met the goal of funding the replacement of 98 windows! Thank you to all who have donated for this cause to ensure the shelter is a safe place for all whom it serves.

### DONATIONS FOR TRI-STATE FOOD BANK

Bethlehem has supported Tri-State Food Bank in various ways, and here's a new opportunity. A Bethlehem member who volunteers at the Food Bank inquired about what items are especially wanted and needed. For the time being, we are going to focus on **canned fruit**. This could be peaches, pears, pineapples, etc., or applesauce and fruit cocktail. We will be receiving these items each communion weekend. For the rest of 2025, these weekends will be September 6/7, October 4/5, November 8/9, and December 6/7. Check Emily's Edition for more details.



We're the team that brings you the numbers, especially the numbers about the energy and money the church has saved because of the solar panels. How much have we saved the environment? As the old commercials says, "Priceless!"

We're also the folks who bring you tips on how to save your money and our earth. How many times can we say, or do you want to hear, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose?" and in what order?

This month, we thought we'd concentrate on why we do this for ourselves and for you and for all of our children and grandchildren, as those native to our land say to the 7<sup>th</sup> generation.

Who better to call on than our neighbor to the south, Wendell Berry?

### **Look it over**

I leave behind even  
my walking stick. My knife  
is in my pocket, but that  
I have forgot. I bring  
no car, no cell phone,  
no computer, no camera,  
no CD player, no fax, no  
TV, not even a book.  
I go into the woods. I sit on  
a log provided at no cost.  
It is the earth I've come to,  
the earth itself, sadly  
abused by the stupidity  
only humans are capable of  
but, as ever, itself. Free.  
A bargain! Get it while it lasts.

Wendell Berry  
Leavings

## Stewardship at Bethlehem

The Stewardship season is upon us! Over the next few weeks, you will hear personal stories from Bethlehem members that highlight the Church's impact upon their lives. What we do at Bethlehem matters: in our own faith journeys, and in the lives of our neighbors.

Every dollar we give to Bethlehem represents ministry! The mission and ministry of this Church aren't just the things we do; they are the heartbeat of why we belong, volunteer, and give. So, whether the Treasurer's Report of our Budget reflects Benevolence, Church Ministries, Grounds and Maintenance, Office Travel, or Personnel, it's all ministry! Every dollar we give to Bethlehem enhances our ministry as members of the Church following Christ's example. We should embrace this truth and be thankful for it.

This Stewardship season, be generous in this spiritual practice. It helps us change lives. It matters!

**Save the dates!**  
Consecration Weekend October 4 & 5



## Red Cross Shelter

Did you know that in July, the Bethlehem Church Council voted for Bethlehem to be a Red Cross short-term emergency shelter? The installation of showers in our facilities several years ago makes possible our hosting families displaced by fire or severe weather. In August, Pastor Emily met with the Red Cross representative to finalize the paperwork. In the future, look for opportunities to be trained to serve emergency shelter guests should the need arise!



## *Welcome Bienvenidos*

In June, I had a conversation with Abraham Brown, the keynote speaker at the Habitat for Humanity Faith in Action breakfast. He shared the struggles facing immigrants in Evansville, including those who were taken and deported before there was time for any intervention. He also shared about the Venezuelan community in Evansville. These are people who came to the country legally years ago under Temporary Protective Status, but who already have or soon will lose that status. They have built lives here and now must figure out what to do next—some with both babies and aging parents to think of.



My colleague's stories were sobering. We share this same city, but his congregation does not feel the safety that mine blessedly gets to take for granted. I asked Abraham, "What can we do?" His answer surprised me. He asked if we'd consider putting "Bievenido" on our church doors. He said of all the pain currently in Evansville's Hispanic community, the greatest wound is a feeling that maybe they really aren't welcome here. This simple word, meaning "welcome" in Spanish, could make a difference.

It's literally the least we can do. When you see the bilingual sign upon entering the building, may it signal you to join me in offering a prayer for mercy and compassion for immigrants in our country. And let us pray for other opportunities to care for these "least of these" in ways that reflect Christ's love and values.

The chancel and bell choirs had a great time at their annual dinner. Interested in joining a choir? There is time to still be a part of the worship music at Bethlehem. Contact Director Wayne Jones for more information at [waynekristin85@gmail.com](mailto:waynekristin85@gmail.com).



Notice something different?

Next time you're at the church, be sure to take notice of our refreshed sign!

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](http://bethlehem/estar) or by contacting the church office (867-2497) for a printed list.





On Saturday, September 27, Bethlehem will host its 18th annual Fish Fry from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. This year's event will again be CARRYOUT ONLY; however, some outdoor seating will be available under the pavilion. Please feel free to bring a lawn chair if you are able to sit under nature's tree canopy.

Your \$12 ticket includes: 3 pieces of fish, baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, and a fudge brownie with caramel sauce.

Please consider purchasing a couple of extra dinners to share with friends and family. As always, all proceeds of the Fish Fry will go towards the Tri-State Food Bank and Gather Network.

No advanced ticket sales. If you have any questions about the Fish Fry, please contact Glenn Heseman or the church office at [church@bethlehemucc.org](mailto:church@bethlehemucc.org).

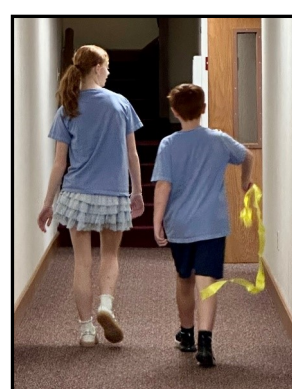


## Great News!

Effective August 17, Margaret Eberhart has a new job title! She is now our "Director of Fellowship and Faith Formation!" In addition to her continued work with the children and youth, she will now also be responsible for keeping up with our college students and supporting our fellowship gatherings at Bethlehem. Her hours will increase from 25 to 30 hours per week. We're so thankful for her many gifts and her heart for the work she does!



# Rally Day









In August, Pastor Emily attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Volunteer Center for Habitat for Humanity. This new facility will allow volunteers to work on parts of the home away from the actual construction site (and the heat rain/sleet/darkness!).

It's estimated that \$4,500 will be saved per build through reduced waste and reduced theft. Did you know that Evansville needs 4,000 new homes over the next five years? Habitat is part of the mayor's effort to build 2,000 by the end of 2027!



## NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

On October 12, we will have a New Member Sunday at Bethlehem. If you're interested in learning more about what it means to join Bethlehem, please reach out to Pastor Emily ([emily@bethlehemucc.org](mailto:emily@bethlehemucc.org)).

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](http://bethlehemucc.org). To streamline the process, please sign up online if at all possible or contact Cindy Carwile. 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:

September 7  
November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30  
December 7, 14



## Financial Recap

### July General Account

	2025	2024
Monthly Beginning Balance	\$ 135,481.66	\$ 182,333.73
Monthly Pledge Deposits	24,259.84	43,567.21
Monthly Other Deposits	1,200.29	700.81
Monthly Operating Disbursements	(37,568.05)	(43,505.26)
Monthly Other Disbursements	8,050.00	2,159.22
Monthly Ending Balance	<u>\$ 131,423.74</u>	<u>\$ 185,255.71</u>

### YTD General Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 170,535.44	\$ 182,223.60
Pledge Deposits	243,330.39	217,769.47
Other Deposits	11,104.13	7,822.42
Operating Disbursements	(302,194.24)	(254,362.21)
Other Disbursements	8,648.02	31,802.43
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 131,423.74</u>	<u>\$ 185,255.71</u>





Did you notice generous church members donated a framed print of Natalie's art that now hangs above the stairs heading down to the Children and Youth wing? Thank you for your generosity and may the work's message of hope encourage us all!

## CHURCH COUNCIL

- We are pleased to announce that Margaret Eberhart will be stepping into a new role as Director of Fellowship and Faith Formation. In this new role, Margaret will continue to oversee the ministry of our children and youth while also expanding her leadership to include outreach to our college-aged students and coordinating church-wide fellowship opportunities.
- Changes to the Constitution and By-Laws have been approved by Council and are ready for review by the congregation. Dates for those review sessions will be communicated very soon; we look forward to your feedback!!
- We encourage you to bring any questions or concerns to our next Council Chat that will be held on Sunday, September 28.





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

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

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Dear Bethlehem UCC,

Thank you for your recent contribution and your faithful support of Weekday Christian Education. Last year, we were able to share the Gospel with 812 public school students during school hours every week, ensuring our students learned to value themselves and others, learned of God's immeasurable love for them, and learned that their identity could be found in Him (Ephesians 2:10)

We were also made aware of three students who made the decision to get baptized in their local assembly because of what they learned at Weekday (Praise the Lord!) and two families that found a church home by the prompting of their Weekday student. This is only possible because of donors like you who take an interest in and action for these students, many of whom would never hear about Jesus without Weekday.

Thank you!  
Britney Casebolt



**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](mailto:church@bethlehemucc.org)

website: [bethlehemucc.org](http://bethlehemucc.org)

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#### **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.***