



Bethel United Church of Christ

DECEMBER 2023



The LINK is a monthly publication LINKing together the people of Bethel United Church of Christ

**BENEVOLENCE—SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING  
UCC CHRISTMAS FUND**

*“Grace upon Grace.” John 1:16*

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

<b>SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PRAYER CARE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>BIRTHDAYS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FINANCIAL UP-DATE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>COOKIE FUND-RAISER</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CANTATA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>POINSETTIA ORDER FORM</b>	<b>4</b>

**LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE—DECEMBER 21—7 PM**



The service will be followed by a brief time for light refreshments and fellowship.

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- **Children’s Christmas Sunday—December 10**
- **Caroling—December 10**
- **Christmas Cantata—December 17**
- **Longest Night Service—December 21 at 7:00 pm**
- **Christmas Eve Services—December 24 at 7:00 pm**

**BETHEL ALL CHURCH RETREAT— DECEMBER 9 10AM—3PM**

Don’t forget to sign up for Bethel’s All Church Retreat to kickoff Bethel’s Dream Year. Lunch will be provided. If you are unable to attend fill out the Church Member Questionnaire, give it to Pastor Laura so you will have a Secret Prayer Partner and pickup your Love Letter Box. If you have questions please contact Pastor Laura.

**CAROLING**

Caroling December 10th—12:00pm, hosted by Membership. We will have a light lunch in the Fellowship Hall before we depart for caroling. Because of the increased costs for renting a bus we will be carpooling, Sign up in the Narthex. Fa-la-la-la!





## SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER

Aahhh-dvent is finally here! This is my favorite time of the year. Advent reminds us that there is always Hope, always Peace, always Joy, always Love in this world. Advent is about expectation, anticipation—like that song from “West Side Story” that says Something’s Coming, Something Great...

But, keeping Advent pure like the snow that comes this time of year can be a daunting task with the inundation of pop culture that tells us to spend more than we can afford on gifts, hosting and attending parties, trying to out-do the Joneses in decorating and displaying. Who can keep up without having their joy overshadowed by the frenzy?

It’s also become nearly impossible to separate the story of Jesus’ birth from the misconceptions which have worked their way into our traditions, music, and even religious observances.

Let me dispel a few of the misconceptions:

–Jesus was not likely born in December/midwinter. While the exact date remains unknown, based on when the pregnant Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant with John, he may have been born in mid to late September. Or, going by shepherds being in the field at night, he may have been born in the Spring or the Fall.

–Jesus was not born in a stable. I am thankful that the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (published last year), states the baby was placed in a manger because there was “no place in the guest room”. Joseph took his betrothed to his hometown of Bethlehem, to be counted with his family. Note: There is no mention in the Bible of them seeking shelter. An “inn” was a guest room or addition where visitors stayed. People kept their animals in the downstairs of their stone homes in town—not in outbuildings like barns and stables.

–The Bible does not say how many “wisemen” came from the East. Nor does it say they were kings. Nor does it give their names!

–The wisemen were NOT at the birth of Jesus. The Gospel according to Matthew reports they visited the CHILD Jesus who was living in a house in Bethlehem. It was their arrival in Jerusalem and making inquiries as to where the king of Jews had been born that spurred Herod’s action to murder all male children under the age of two (another clue as to how old Jesus was when they visited).

I encourage you this Advent to take a step back, lock out the glitter and glam, block out the noise of never-ending hoopla, tuck yourself into a comfortable chair, and read the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke. There you will find everything you need to restore Advent to you—the Hope born to the world in the form of a lowly infant: who is Christ the Lord, Emmanuel—God With Us.

God’s PB&J,  
Pastor Laura

**PRAYER CARE**



Randy Pace; Rachel Wolfe; Joe Luttrell; Adam Niederhauser; Rachel Terrill; Jamie Elder; Larry Jurgensen; Nelda Ravenscraft; Lauri Arbuthnot; Gerry McGuire; Debbie Robinett; Cathy Leslie; Marilyn Helmich; Elaine McDuff; Linda Jackson; Bobbi Wendle; Alice & Jim Inman; Vern Bohlmeier, Dale & Shianne Reith.

AnnaLee Kapp's sister, Sara & niece, Caitlin & Brianna; Art & Darlene Todtenhausen's friend, Jen; Pastor Laura's friend, Terie; Chad Willis' mother, Kristy; Pat Armstrong & Don Sand's friend, Gary; Jamie Elder's friend, Don; Fulvio & Kathy Hayes' friend, Virginia; Adele Jones; Kim Heft's brother, Warren; Gerry Hendrix's sister Donna; Vince Watkins' father, Harold & step-brother Glen; Bev

Duer's sister, Nancy; Mary Fleener's friends, JT & Nancy; Marty Pace's sister & brother-in-law, Michelle & Dan; Rachel Wolfe's aunt & uncle, Beverly & Reggie; Lauri Buck's friend, Kristi; AnnaLee Kapp's relatives, the Hershman family & her friend Julie; Bob Atkinson's brother, David; Marilyn Helmich's daughter, Carolyn; Randy Pace's friend, Marvin

We will continue to keep these members and friends in our prayers. Each month the list will be reviewed, so keeping us informed of any additions or corrections is important.

**THANK YOU**

Dear Bethel Family,

Thank you, again, for all your love, prayers and support around my mothers passing. She is at peace now.

Vicki and Joe Thompson

**TIME & TALENT SHEETS & PLEDGE CARDS**

It's still not too late to turn in your Time & Talent sheets and Pledge cards.

**BETHEL FINANCIAL UPDATE—WHERE WE ARE & WHAT WE NEED**

To meet 2023 monthly budgeted expenses, we need \$13,528 in contributions. Current fund contributions for November were \$10,900, resulting in a budget shortfall of \$2,628.

**BETHEL COOKIE FUNDRAISER**

Following worship on December 17 we will have cookies for sale in the Bistro. The money collected will be used to support Bethel's current fund. Cost for cookies is \$10 for a 2 dozen assorted box and \$5 for a 1 dozen assorted box. The cookies will be delicious baked items from Bethel fantastic chefs. Don't miss this opportunity to purchase delicious cookies and support Bethel at the same time,



**DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

- |    |                 |    |                           |
|----|-----------------|----|---------------------------|
| 1  | Betty Weger     | 13 | Cameron Niederhauser      |
| 2  | Kim Heft        | 14 | Elaine McDuff             |
| 7  | Sandy Bohlmeier | 17 | Cathy Leslie              |
| 8  | Gary Pierson    | 18 | Tim Coulter, Mike Hendrix |
| 11 | Drew Hendrix    | 29 | AnnaLee Kapp              |





**CANTATA—DECEMBER 17**

On December 17<sup>th</sup> the choir will perform the cantata “ Seekers of the Light” by Mark Hayes. The world was lost in darkness. Roman oppression weighed heavily, and God's people were awaiting a Messiah. There were astrologers . . . literally following the light of the heavens and prophecies of the coming Messiah. But there were other "seekers of the Light": Mary and Joseph, simple shepherds in a field, and the prophets. Then, it happened. The Light of the World was born. Follow the respective journeys of these "seekers of the Light" to learn what we can from their sojourns. May we likewise seek and find the Light for our journey . . . and transform our lives with a fresh touch of God's miraculous grace and gift of Love.

**OFFERING ENVELOPES—2024**

Beginning in December, offering envelopes will be available for pick-up in the Narthex. Each box contains 52 weeks of dated envelopes, plus an Initial Envelope to help defray the cost of the envelopes.

Changes for 2024:

- Members’ numbers will no longer be printed on the envelope and will no longer be used. To record the offering to your account, please write your name on the envelope.
- There will no longer be extra envelopes (formerly the lavender ones) at the back of the box for special offerings. Special offerings can be recorded on another line on the front of the envelope or using one of the pew envelopes.

Most importantly, **your name needs to be written on the outside of the envelope**. Any person is welcome and encouraged to use the envelopes for offerings. For any questions, please contact Shirlee Mendon, Financial Secretary.

**BACKPACK SHEPHERD’S CHRISTMAS BOXES**

**Backpack Shepherds** Christmas boxes have all been spoken for. It is a great for us to give thanks and help our community! These boxes will provide food over the holiday break for needy families. Don’t forget to return the boxes to Bethel by **Dec. 10th**. If you’d like your box picked up from your home, please contact Pat Armstrong 816-695-7825.



**POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS**



If you would like to donate a poinsettia for this Christmas season, please fill in the form below and leave in the office or place in the offering plate along with your contribution of \$10.00 for each poinsettia ordered. The poinsettias will be purchased and delivered directly to the church. Please turn in forms by December 13.

**BETHEL POINSETTA ORDER FORM**

Donated by \_\_\_\_\_

Amount donated \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Poinsettias Ordered \_\_\_\_\_

In honor/memory Of \_\_\_\_\_