



St. Stephens Bethlehem United Church of Christ

January & February Newsletter

Hello Church Family & Friends,

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away;
see, everything has become new!*

– [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) 

Do you ever think about why we celebrate New Year's Day? It's really just another day, so why is it so important for people to mark a date change on a calendar?

We suspect it's because a new year offers a new beginning, the chance to start fresh. There's a reason January is the most important month of the year for gyms and diet programs, because it seems like a fresh chance to start again, to improve yourself. It seems like a natural time for beginning something, which is why lots of people make New Year's resolutions (*whether they stick to them or not is another story!*).

A year has many moments of joy and sadness. As we reflected about 2024 at church; we brought back some old traditions that our congregation cherished and started some new events to show our community we are an active church. We were blessed with many very successful fundraisers, to help with our budget. We continue with many maintenance and cleaning projects at church to keep our building a fresh. People enjoyed our new community dinners and socializing with members of the community. We lost 3 members in 2024 (Ken, Ray & Geraldine) of our congregation through death, gained 4 members (Joy, Jason, Kim & Jeff) and had 5 baptisms. We will continue to try "NEW" things to make our church welcoming and progressive. Our friends from Kenilworth UCC will be starting a "NEW" beginning with us in 2025. "New Life" is always happening at SSBUCC.

Our Advent & Christmas season was a very busy time of the year. We had breakfast with Santa (Dec 1) and our first ever Christmas Community dinner and caroling event (Dec 18) with many guests from our neighborhood. We went caroling to our church shut-ins. Shared our famous Christmas cookies during coffee hour. You have been so generous this time of year by supporting our Memorial Angels sale to decorate our sanctuary tree with, donating Poinsettias for our altar, and donating items for our warming and giving tree for members of our community. We are truly blessed. As we move through this season of giving, let's ensure that the spirit of the season extends long after the decorations have come down; Advent & Christmas at church in July? Now, there's a thought!!!

You don't have to wait for a new year to have a fresh start. Each day offers the opportunity to wake up and remember that we are a baptized child of God. We have been claimed,

redeemed, and set free by Jesus Christ. After hearing the promise of forgiveness and absolution in worship, we continue the only way we can, by together giving joyful thanks to God in song and by learning more about God's grace and love for us by hearing God's word. See you in worship!

Bill Chapman, John Frenning, Cody Mejeur, Rob Seth, Amy Strusienski & Joe Tricoli.
Your Leadership Team Members:

Treasurer Report:(January 1 - December 1, 2024)

General Checking: \$11,947.31

General Savings: \$7,055.53

Other Assets: \$351,429.73

The leadership team has finalized the paper work with the Law Office of Kelly E. Coughlin to be submitted to the New York Attorney General Office for the sale of the Hopkins Road property.

Kenilworth UCC Update.

The congregation of Kenilworth had a special congregational meeting on Sunday, December 29th to vote on selling of their church and to merge with us (St. Stephens Bethlehem UCC).

(It passed with a vote of 28 yes and 0 No) This will be the beginning of a very long process for them now. Thank you to

Etta, Margaret & Marion for volunteering to meet with 3 of Kenilworth members to form a joint worship service format. They will meet with them in mid January, so we can try out this format at our joint worship service in February. Kenilworth UCC will be joining us for worship on Sunday, February 2 at 10:30am. They are hoping to be worshipping with us on a regular basis in April, due to them having a very hard time finding supply pastors to fill their pulpit. Please keep our friends at



Kenilworth in our prayers as they have a lot of hard work and change in the next coming months.



**January &
February
Worship & Events
Schedule**



Sunday, January 5, 2025: Epiphany/ Communion at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Dr. Buddy Hubbard. Celebrate January Birthdays

Sunday, January 12, 2025: Baptism of the Lord Sunday at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Sunday, January 19, 2025: Worship at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Bob Fleming

Sunday, January 26, 2025: Worship at 10:30am, Congregational meeting & budget vote at 11:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Sunday, February 2, 2025: Joint communion & worship service with Kenilworth UCC at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Jan Hubbard.
Souper Bowl Fundraiser 11:30am - 2pm.

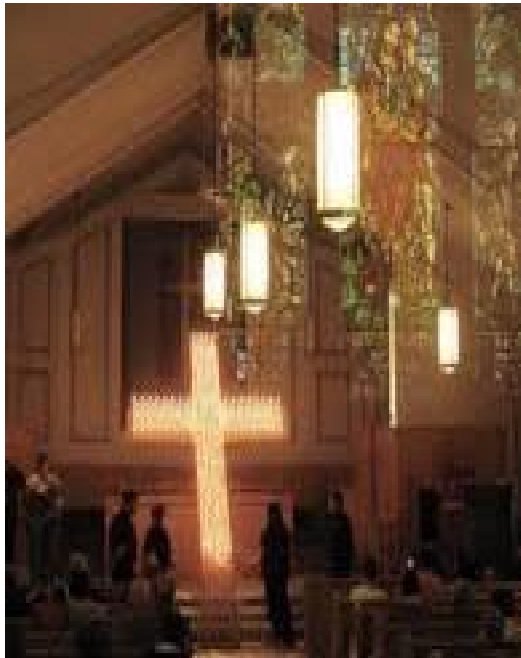
Sunday, February 9, 2025: "Love Theme" worship service at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder. Visiting & delivery of "LOVE" packages to our church's shut-ins after worship. (Super Bowl Sunday)

Sunday, February 16, 2025: Worship at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Bob Fleming. Celebrate February Birthdays.

Sunday, February 23, 2025: Worship at 10:30am. Guest Pastor, Rev. Dr. Ruth Snyder

Tuesday, March 4, 2025: Shrove Tuesday Potato Pancake Dinner Fundraiser. 3 - 7pm.

Wednesday, March 5, 2025: Ash Wednesday Lighted Cross worship service at 6:30pm. Beginning of LENT. Guest Pastor, Rev. Bob Fleming. Candles can be purchased in memory of, in honor of, or in thankfulness. Please see the attached blue envelopes and attached order form for it. The cost will be \$3 per candle.



Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, March 5, 2025
6:30pm
Service of the Lighted Cross

It is our GREAT pleasure to bring back our tradition of the lighted cross worship service to start the period of Lent. Some of you might not know, this cross was made by members of our congregation to raise money to help to pay off the mortgage of our present church building at 750 Wehrle Drive, when it was built in 1956.

Candles can be purchased for \$3.00 each in Memory Of, In Honor Of, and In Thankfulness. You can mail in your order forms, or drop them off in the offering plate by March 1. Names will be printed in the Ash Wednesday bulletin and read off during this worship service. **Extra order forms are located in the narthex, or write additional names on the back of this sheet.**

In Memory Of: _____

In Memory Of: _____

In Memory Of: _____

In Honor Of: _____

In Honor Of: _____

In Thankfulness: _____

Given By: _____



Planning Ahead: Please mark your calendar for our Annual Congregational Meeting & Budget Vote on Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 11:30am. We have 3 open seats on the Leadership team. One 2 year term, and 2 three year terms. If you are interested in serving on the Leadership Team, please let Gineen Frenning or Etta Czaja know.

The Leadership Team created a 2025 Operation Budget of \$150,570 that needs your support on. Please note the huge increase was due to our insurances of \$22,000. We are working on the Annual Report. If anyone would like to submit a report on their group or events that happened, please submit it to ststephensbethlehemucc@gmail.com by January 6, 2025. **The Annual Report will be available to pick up in church on Sunday, January 12th.**



Souper Bowl Luncheon/ Fundraiser **Sunday February 2** **11:30am - 2pm**

If you can donate a crockpot of soup, please let Bill Chapman (wchapman@daemen.edu or 716-989-92550) know. Tickets are \$6 for an unlimited amount of soup. Additional containers can be purchased for \$2 to take soup home in.

We also need items for our regifting auction. You can bring in these items and give them to Cindy, Gineen, Nancy or Bill) . Thanks so much.



Sunday, February 9th 2025

After coffee hour we need volunteers to delivery "LOVE Packages" to our church's shut-ins. See Bill Chapman if you can help out. These will include; soup, apple pie, roll, heart cookie & drink box. The Girl Scout Troop that meets at our church will make valentine crafts and cards to go with these Love packages.



Tuesday, March 4, 2025: Shrove Tuesday Potato Pancake Dinner Fundraiser. 3 - 7pm.

Cost \$12 (Potato Pancakes, Apple Sauce, Rye Bread, Fasnacht or Paczki and Beverage) Call or text 716-989-9255 for reservations. Or purchase your tickets on Sundays.



If the weather is too bad to attend church, you can always watch us on our Youtube channel live (<https://www.youtube.com/@st.stephensbethlehemucc586>), or a taped version on Facebook or our website(www.ssbucc.com).

Thank you to Cody, Joe, Jason & Phil for stepping up and volunteering to Live Stream our worship services.

THANK YOU

The WINGS (Women In God’s Service) Group would like to thank everyone who donated items to their Christmas mission project of collecting items to benefit our Hope & Joy Food Pantry. These are items that Feed More and Food Stamps don’t provide. Thanks so much, you are a true blessing to these recipients.



Thank you for supporting our Memorial Angel Christmas Tree Tradition. We sold 71 angels. Thanks to Donna Sauer for making the angels and organizing it for us. It made our sanctuary so festive and homie for the Christmas Season. Thanks for your support.



Coffee hours are a great time for the congregation to bond and to grow together. If you can help us out by volunteering to host a coffee hour, please let Bill know. The church provides the coffee, juice and paper

products, we just need you to provide the goodies.

Open slots are:

Sunday, January 12: __ Sunday, January 19: __ Sunday, February 23: __

Please Keep the Following People In Your Prayers:

Family of Geraldine Wiseman on her death.

Carolyn Bernhart

Chris Donner

Kim Wilson

Pastor Arthur Davis

Rev. Bob Fleming

Nancy, Tom's Cousin

Aaron, Ken, Helen, Jeff, Melonie (Friends of our congregation)



January Birthdays:

Nancy Smith (Jan. 3)

Amy Strusienski (Jan. 6)

Ava Hartmann (Jan 10)

Rev. Arthur Davis (Jan. 22)

Denise Graser (Jan. 25)

Nick Seth (Jan. 31)

Joe Tricoli (Jan. 31)

February Birthdays:

Nancy Kelly (Feb. 7)

Gary Reese (Feb. 10)

Harold Peters (Feb. 14)

Cheryl Caine (Feb. 20)

Sorry if your name is missing above. We don't have it in our church records, Please contact Bill Chapman so he can include you. Thanks



Flea Market Saturday, April 5, 2025 9am - 2pm

Table Rental is \$20 for an 8 foot table.

See Bill Chapman for an application.

When you are doing your spring cleaning and find items you know longer want, please donate them to the church's flea market table.

Baked Good Sale will also take place this day.

2025 Fundraisers & Major Events:

Please mark your calendars, we need your help!!! We have budgeted making over \$10,000 in fundraisers in our 2025 budget.

Sunday, April 13, 2025 (Palm Sunday), Free Breakfast with the Easter Bunny, 11:30am - 1:30pm. Craft making and game playing.

Friday, April 18th, Good Friday Fish Fry: 3 - 7pm. Cost is \$15.

Haddock fish, potato salad, macaroni salad, cole slaw, bread, apple pie, and beverage. Call 716-989-9255 to reserve your tickets. Eat in or take out. Worship service at 7pm.

Sunday, April 20 Easter Sunday worship at 10:30am.

Sunday, June 1, Theme Basket & Gift Card Raffle. 11am - 3pm.

Thursday & Friday August 28 & 29th Church Yard Sale. 9am - 5pm.

Sunday, October 12, Theme Basket/ Gift Card Raffle & Trunk or Treat Event. 11am - 3pm.

Friday, October 24, Family Halloween Event. 7 - 9pm. Movie, game play & craft making event.

Tuesday, November 4, Election Day Bake Sale. 6am - 6pm

Sunday, November 23, Community Thanksgiving Luncheon, 11:30am - 1:30pm.

Sunday, December 7, Breakfast with Santa. 11:30 - 1:30pm.