

January Updates 2025

Pastor

As another year comes to a close and a new one begins, I am always amazed, when looking back, to see all that we have accomplished together. I would be lying if I said that I had no doubts that two congregations, so close to one another in geographic proximity and with such a long history with one another, would be able to serve together as well as we have for the past few years. There are many congregations in Northwest Ohio, the Heartland Conference, and even nationally who are struggling to make ends meet, to live up to their historic standards, and, in some cases, even to find or have a full-time ministry. And yet, here in the community of Bluffton, we have found a way together.

In large part I believe that our survivability is due to the Spirit of God, for sure, but also because of our willingness to adapt to our circumstances, live within our means (even when the Pastor has crazy ideas of how to spend more money/resources), and work together for the betterment of our community. As a minister, we are often compared to shepherds, with Christ being The Shepherd of The Flock of Christ's Church. A shepherd's task is not an easy one as oftentimes sheep can be rather stubborn, silly, and seemingly scatterbrained. We hear that Jesus leaves the 99 in order to seek out the 1, but that is because the 1 has wandered off and is probably stuck in the same place it always gets stuck. Jesus knows where to look for that 1.

This is a beautiful analogy, however it is not entirely accurate when describing the task of the modern day minister. Sheep, when you ask a real shepherd or farmer, are fairly dumb animals. Members of congregations are not. We are all thinking, feeling, and opinionated individuals who have decided to put our personal wills aside in order to discern together what God's Will is for us in our lives. And, more importantly, what God's Will is for our congregations. We find ourselves constantly asking, "How can we better serve?", "What more can we do?", "How might we be able to give back?" and these are wonderful discerning questions.

Where we can get hung up is when questions like, "How do we get more people here?" and "How can we make more money?" become our focus. Jesus did not have focus groups where he tested out slogans and products in order to get the best reaction and highest sales numbers. He wasn't worried about shareholders or bottom lines. He conducted ministry and the people followed. He fed the people, and

they followed. Jesus healed the people, and they followed. He served the people, and they followed. This is how the church began to grow, as a byproduct of his ministry. Outreach was done by word of mouth. He spoke, and the people listened. He sent out his disciples so that they might speak, and the people listened. The community of Bluffton is listening. And so the question we should be asking is this, “What are *we* saying?”. “What is *God* saying, through us?”

Now I’ve mentioned this many times before and so it should come as no surprise to you, that in a community of around 4,000 people (on a good day), we now have 13+ congregations hailing from all parts of our Protestant faith. The Church Universal in our community has a lot of ‘white noise’ out there. I mean that not to say our faith is ‘white noise’, but there are a lot of God’s children speaking and we are not necessarily cornering the market on God’s Holy Word. This is a *good* thing! God’s hands are working in this community. God’s Spirit is working in this community. I am reminded of this fact every time I gather with the Bluffton Area Ministerial Association with some really great pastor friends here in the community.

But what I am also reminded of every year, is that, while our community has a great faith, there are still many in our community who have not claimed their faith by claiming a church family as their own. With our ability to be flexible, to be open to others, and to be inviting, it should be our focus in 2025 to reach out to our neighbors and to invite them to join us in some way. Worship with us, dine with us, ride with us, serve with us; come and see what ‘new thing’ God is doing, and let us continue to spread the Word here in Bluffton. May you have a blessed and happy New Year!

Blessings,
Pastor Jeremy

“As the old year retires and a new one is born, we commit into the hands of our Creator the happenings of the past year and ask for direction and guidance in the new one. May He grant us His grace, His tranquility and His wisdom!”

quote by Peggy Toney Horton

January

*****Annual Reports due in January*****

Women's Outreach

Women's Outreach would like to thank everyone who helped with the Adopt a family.

Thank you for your generous support in this mission!

The Flower Chart for 2024 is up. If you would like to sign up and are not coming to church you can call the church - 419-358-1561

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February 9

"Souper" Bowl Sunday

Bring in soup cans for the Bluffton Food Pantry
(Made possible by congregational life committee)
More details to come



March EVENTS

Ash Wednesday
March 5

Spring Fish Fry
Friday, March 14

January 5

John 1:1-18

January 12

Luke 3:15-22

January 19

John 2:1-11

January 26

Luke 4:14-21

Praying the
SCRIPTURES
elisapulliam.com

Check monthly calendar and website for days and times of events and services:

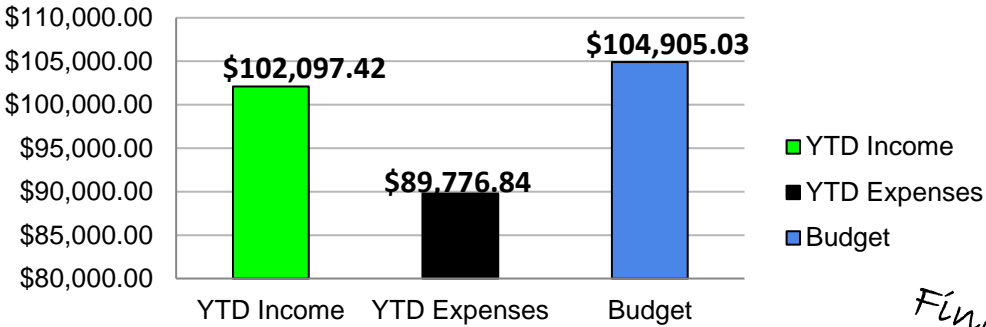
www.emmanueluccbluffton.com

Prayers for

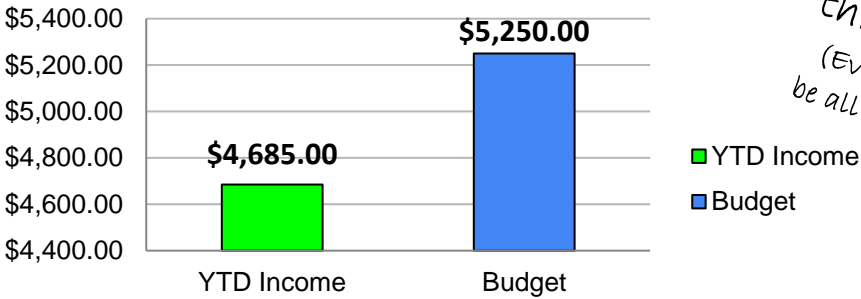
Sean Burrell

Regena Mummert

Capital Campaign update \$34,500.00 (Goal is \$50,000.00)

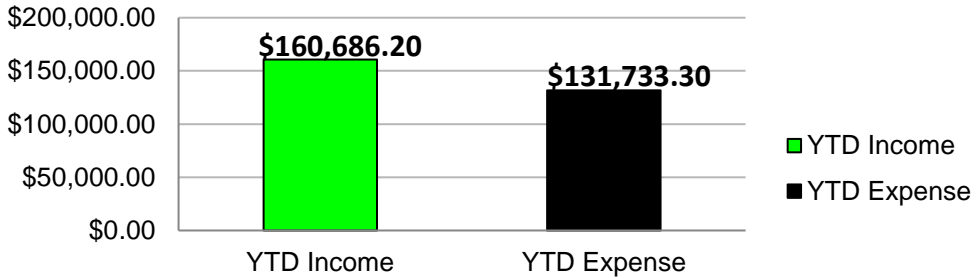


Current Fund Summary - YTD 2024



Benevolence Fund Summary - YTD 2024

Financial Information through 2024 (Everything may not be all in for December)



Overall Income/Expense - YTD 2024



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wed. Thurs. Friday Sat.

			1	2	3	4
5 Worship 9:00am Noisy Collection	6 Epiphany	7	8	9	10	11
12 Worship 9:00am Communion Installation	13 Consistory 6:30	14	15	16	17	18
19 Worship 9:00am	20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	21	22	23	24	25
26 Worship 9:00am	27	28	29	30	31	

01/01 Regena Mummert
01/02 Elnora Moser
01/04 Lauren (Parkins) Alt
01/07 Jill Burkholder
Lindsey Kiene
01/08 Kinzley Lutz
01/10 Cindy Kelly
Tony Rumer
01/14 Ethan Luginbuhl
Rae Lynn Reichenbach
01/16 Tony Pinks
01/18 Pat Arnold
01/22 Steve Stark
Todd Steele
01/25 Gerry Fett
01/26 Kayl Aller
01/27 Maryn Cottrell
Mary Fett



**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!**

**NOTE:
TIME CHANGE
STARTING
JANUARY 1, 2024
WORSHIP
9:00AM
ADULT FAITH
FORMATION
following worship**

Emmanuel UCC is in charge of the Vacation Bible School this year. We will keep you posted on what is needed or if you would like to help reach out to Jenn Mann (call or text 717-813-1485). Thank you for your support in VBS. Below is the theme. *VBS 2025*

Groups Holy Land Adventure™



Consistory 2025

Elders: Logan Fruchey, Kelli Fruchey, Jaret Geiser, Nick Shepler

Deacons: Jerilyn Neeper, Sara Music, Erin Burkholder, Jane Agner

Emmanuel UCC
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Bluffton, OH 45817
419-358-1561

www.emmanueluccbluffton.com

Church office hours Monday and Wednesday 8am to 1pm