

UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

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UNITED CHURCHES OF LYCOMING COUNTY

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NEWSLETTER / OFFICE UPDATE

Almost everything is different in a world of social distancing. Yet another impact is United Churches newsletter. As you can see, this newsletter is being delivered via Mailchimp© due to email constraints. Please let your friends know that this issue is out. Some folks are finding that the new delivery system is not recognized and has placed the newsletter in a file they don't usually use, so they may have to look for it and move it to their regular inbox.



Don't forget that our main office is closed as much as possible these days because of the coronavirus, and we are working from home as possible. As you will read later, our Food Pantry and Shepherd Office are both open with slightly adjusted hours. We want everyone to stay safe and well!

A hard copy version is not being mailed, both because of social distancing and financial constraints. We ask that you share this information as you are able. The regular newsletter is available on our website and you can go directly there by clicking www.uclc.org/newsletter.

Anyone now wishing to receive a newsletter via email please contact Gwen: director@uclc.org or 570-419-1464.

POVERTY: A FAITH-BASED RESPONSE

Christian Social Concerns Committee

Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. (Isaiah 58:7). These words have inspired many through the centuries. They take on renewed meaning and serve as a challenge at this time of global health concerns. "Your own" needs to be an all-encompassing expression.



Hunger and the Coronavirus - The world is living through unprecedented times. The coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing anxiety, uncertainty, and disruption. As is often the case, people living in hunger and poverty are likely to suffer the most. Though we may feel powerless and overwhelmed, we are not. Now is the time to heed God's call to care for the "least among us." (www.bread.org)

The Role of Faith during a Pandemic - The outbreak and rapid spread of COVID-19 is a reminder of just how interconnected we are as a people and as a world. In the Bible, a plague is often seen as a call to prayer and repentance, and God promises to 'heal the land' that asks for help and helps people in need (2 Chronicles 7:14). We pray for all those affected by this global pandemic. Let us offer this

prayer:

God of Hope and Healing:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on all people everywhere so that anxiety might be transformed into assurance that you are with us.

Give strength to our public health officials, elected leaders, doctors, and nurses everywhere as they work to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

Protect those among us who are vulnerable in this time, those who will experience greater hunger, and those who do not have access to reliable and adequate healthcare.

We give thanks for first responders, who put their own health and safety at risk to save the lives of others. May they have every resource they need to do their jobs well and safely. All this we pray, through Jesus Christ, our rock and our strength. Amen. (www.bread.org)

COVID-19 Impact on Those Living with Poverty – The specific impacts are already being felt by many with layoffs that are resulting in loss of income and unemployment. Many organizations and agencies are attempting to help individuals and families in need as best they can at this time. The challenge will be to continue to respond to what likely will be the long-term consequences for many.

STILL THE PLACE TO BE FOR LUNCH WEDNESDAYS *

Join us Wednesdays for an interesting program! Bring your lunch to your computer, tablet or smartphone and enjoy the fellowship and program. You'll find you'll be enriched mentally, spiritually and socially.



There is no cost to you connect to this Zoom meeting. Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/728915712>. This link will either help you download the app or prompt you to open your app. You are also able to connect by telephone. Call 1-301-715-8592, when prompted enter the meeting number, 728-915-712. (This call is a toll call so check your long distance service.)

APRIL:

29- **The Rev. Kenneth Elkin**, retired Lutheran Pastor, Williamsport area, *“Digging Up At Khirbet al-Rai, Israel.”*

MAY:

6- **Mr. Robert Schweppenheiser**, new local author, who co-authored *“Looking For Love - the story of a teenage girl who struggles with constant bullying and abuse, and her quest for true love.”*

13- TBA

20- TBA Watch for details in the Saturday newspaper

27- TBA

or on our website!

SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

J. Morris Smith, Th.D.,
570-322-6538, shepherd@uclc.org

April 1st Began Our 32 Year



During the COVID-19 pandemic the Shepherd ministry is open 9 am to noon, Monday through Thursday, so that dependents can procure their medicines and reach their out of town medical appointments.

Contributions, though fewer in number, have been adequate to service daily needs, except for the pharmaceutical bills that come every two weeks. We must reach into our reserves to pay that.

Donations of hygiene items, diapers for infants and adults, have lessened dramatically, especially toilet paper. No doubt much of this is due to the closing of church buildings where these collections are often gathered.

Only one of our volunteers, a retired nurse, is currently coming in to volunteer, so we have extra staff on Tuesday morning. All other volunteers have stayed in place for this period. The administrator and the shepherd continue to serve those in need. Clients in need have fluctuated from six to eighteen daily.

The Shepherd office has offered this service because we feel it essential to make sure that medicine and gasoline should be available while anxiety about sickness is so prevalent.

So far, we have had no clients with visible signs of coronavirus symptoms and many signs that the people are utilizing the federal guidelines of social distancing, wearing face coverings and gloves when in public.

With strict observance and a happy spirit we feel safe and comfortable.

To help us bring hope and help to those who ask, send a blessing to Shepherd of the Streets, Box P.O. 2184, Williamsport, PA 17703 and/or visit us at Shepherd of the Streets, 320 Park Ave., Monday - Thursday, 9am-noon.

Thank you also for your donation of hygiene items, baby needs, and/or bedding. These family sized hygiene items are such a blessing especially now when it is extra important! This continues to be a necessary part of our ministry. The list follows:

*Toothpaste and Toothbrushes
Shaving Cream and Razors
Shampoo and Conditioner
Women's Hygiene Products
Towels and Wash Cloths
Bedding and Blankets
Tissues and Toilet Paper and Paper Towels
Soap Deodorant Combs
Baby Diapers Baby Shampoo Baby Oil
Baby Q-Tips Baby Wipes Baby Powder*



FOOD PANTRY *

Mona Rundio, Coordinator 570-322-1657

Email - foodpantry@uclc.org



Tammy Aichner, Coordinator, ucm@uclc.org

During suffering or challenges it is hard to understand and keep courage especially during these days. The COVID-19 virus seems to have put us in a stand still. We may be limited physically but that doesn't stop our souls from soaring! God has taken away all of life's distractions to have us lean more each other and on Him. During this difficult time, we can bring Glory to God by continuing his good works as we are strengthened in our courage through our faith.

We can, even if to stay at home, serve all types of people selflessly by providing what is needed to them. "We are all encouraged" during difficult times or sufferings (Acts 27:33-36). We can help build-up the church and world and may even become famous for our faith, hospitality and generosity! This is not selfish nor prideful but God's will for us to be as Christlike as possible no matter the circumstances!



The Food Pantry provides an essential service to our community during hard times, just as do the grocery stores. So please find the opportunity/means to help us keep stocked up on food. We are in need of all types of food that the unemployed, the poor, and the homeless can use with or without cooking equipment. This can be done either by buying food when out for yourself or by financial donations. If do financially donate make sure you do put Food Pantry on the memo line and send it to United Churches, 202 East Third St., Williamsport, PA. 17701.

We are operating during this time, modified for safety!
Days and Time:

Monday 9-11 for donations/stocking/deliveries
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:15 – 12pm

"So keep your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen jut as he told me" – Acts 27:25

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet today?
The number is 570-322-5762.
It's available 24/7.

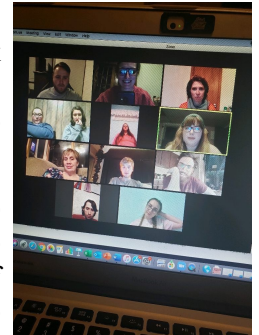


Devotions are three minutes or less, change daily, and are designed to lift your spirits and help you to have "A Closer Walk with God" even when we have to practice social distancing! The devotiona- lists this spring are:

4/27-5/3 Pastors Jim/Kathy Behrens 5/4-10 Rev. Ken Wagner-Pizza
5/11-17 Mrs. Tiffany Haller 5/18-24 Rev. Danesta Whaley
5/25-31 Rev. Georgianna Welsh 6/1-7 Rev. Ron Shellhamer

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!

As with many things, Campus Ministry certainly has looked different this past month. As our students went home for Spring Break, they were given word that it would be extended another week. As that week progressed, the decision had been made to discontinue face to face instruction...and on, and on...



We have continued to fellowship through Zoom for our Monday night Bible studies. Monday is the hardest day of the week for me. I always said that I re-charged myself by being in their presence, and I meant it. I never realized how much until March 16th. As the time approached when we would have normally gathered, my heart grew heavy. Each week I get through with as much normalcy as possible, until Monday night...

Our pastors have been great by agreeing to lead the studies even though we are no longer on campus. The students continue with student organization requirements and meetings online, despite so many outside distractions calling to them. We are posting the Jesus and Java devotions to our GroupMe every Wednesday. And I continue to miss them every day...

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
DUE TO CONCERNS ABOUT COVID-19...



United Churches Annual Golf Tournament planned for this fall has been cancelled for 2020. Concerns about the impact of the coronavirus to the health and the economy of our community led the planning committee to make this decision. The new date is Friday, September 24, 2021 when we will celebrate both our tenth tournament and the 75th anniversary of United Churches. We look forward to your being part of that special tournament!

Faxon Kenmar Free Community Concert was postponed fin April The new date is November 15, 2020.

Annual Women's Retreat: "Sisterhood: How and Why to Create a Community of Faith" sponsored by First UMC, Muncy on Saturday, May 2 was cancelled.

Mental Health First Aid Training will be held on Wednesday, June 3rd has been cancelled. Other opportunities for training in our area will be announced at a later date.

BUILDING SELF ESTEEM and PREVENTION RESOURCES



Sunday School Lessons called **Prevention Through Faith Intervention** are available for use to positively influence young minds to steer clear of harmful drugs. The full curriculum is available on our website, www.uclc.org free of

charge. They make great lessons to use as we shelter at home or gather in virtual meetings. Click on the resources button at the top of the page and then on **Resources for Congregations**.

The brain child of **Fr. John Manno**, this series was designed locally working with a host of area pastors and drug prevention professionals. There are ten lessons covering the topics of acceptance, affirmation, appreciation, care, courage, creativity, hope, relief, safety and success. All of the lessons give kids reasons ... to not get involved with drugs and alcohol. It gives them the strength to say, "I don't need that, I'm already OK on my own."



The program is not an effort to replace drug abuse education, but rather to back it up by teaching youth about self esteem, relaxation and natural highs. Each lesson takes scripture from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament that relate to one another. Leaders are supplied will have questions to ask students about the objective of the stories and how it can relate to drugs. If you have questions or need more information please contact United Churches of Lycoming County.



Virtual Support Group Meeting: The Williamsport Area Christian Mental Health Support Group is meeting through teleconference (Google Meet). The meetings are being held the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 12:30pm to 2pm. In order to be included in the teleconference meeting you will need to send your email address to calvaryhillretreat@yahoo.com and mention that you want to be included in the meeting. Since these meetings are confidential you should not give your name. This is a Christ centered support group meant to help those individuals dealing with mental health or emotional issues. It is also open to family members or friends.

PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH....

especially during the Coronavirus Pandemic

- Check out Facebook/NAMI North Central Pennsylvania
- Go to namikeystonepa.org (COVID-19 resources)
- WILLIAMSPORT CRISIS LINE- 570-326-7895
- LOCK HAVEN CRISIS LINE - 570-748-2262

- Keystone PA Helpline 1-888-264-7972 (9am-2pm)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
- CRISIS TEXT LINE 741741
- PA Support & Referral Hotline (WARM LINE) 1-855-284-2494 (24 hr/toll-free)
- Disaster Distress Helpline – 1-800-985-5990
- WeAreHereWithYou.com ...inspirational speakers NAMI of Greater Des Moines

AREA MINISTRIES

Sojourner Truth Ministries: THANK YOU to all who had any part in their open house for Sojourner Truth Ministry and their House of Hope on Feb 28. It was wonderful to see you there! We feel loved and supported by our community - our faith community especially. And we raised over \$12,000 to help with the operating costs. We couldn't be more grateful.

Recently, because of COVID-19 there have been many changes: We are open for lunch only - and to go only, from 11:30-12:30. We serve from the door, Monday - Saturday. We try to put a Scripture in each lunch and offered a printed devotion for the days of Holy Week with an activity.



Our numbers have gone up! The other day it was double- we served 88 plus 20 more for the After School Kids (which volunteers deliver to their homes). We are unable to be open to the public for things such as the clothing closet or walk in social service assistance.

Our Needs:

- simple, relevant PRINTED scriptures to tuck into a take-out container, (eg.- 9 per page, copied x 9 pages) or encouragement, smily faces, etc. As much as these people are hungry for food, most are practically starving for connection and their community.
- Simple, printed copies of devotions that they could take along would be great. (copies for about 25-30) They miss hearing the Word.
- Some of our homeless friends need bandanas for face coverings.
- postage stamps for our office use.
- a handy person to install several security cameras outside the building. Call: 570-323-1797
- Qualified candidates for running the House of Hope (check www.stmwilliamsport.org for more information)

Thank you! His Peace,

~ Rev. C. Angeliqe Labadie-Cihanowyz



Nursing Home Update: As you know, nursing homes are not allowing visitors except in end of life situations. They are encouraging families to “visit” via window visits, phone calls and Facetime. Residents also enjoy devotional resources like “Our Daily Bread”, and they also like receiving cards in the mail! Keep in touch and in prayer!

UPDATE ON GOING PLASTIC FOAM FREE

All products ordered initially have been delivered and stored for the past month plus at New Covenant United Church of Christ. When it is feasible to unpack and sort each participating congregation will again be notified to schedule pick-up. We look forward to more congregations joining effort, and have also had several small businesses express interest through the Chamber of Commerce.

Our UMCOR grant period has been extended 6 months so we now have a year to complete our project. An initial report will be submitted this June. Thank you all for your support of Environmental Justice. We all know that Stewardship begins at home to take and use what you need and reuse wisely. The Earth Thanks You! -Gail Landers, Coordinator.

CREATION CORNER

Christian Social Concerns Committee

April 2020 Matters & 50th anniversary of Earth Day

- Earth Day Network (www.earthday.org)
- Earth Day 50, April 22 1970-2020. Together We Can Stop Climate Change. Speak Up. Show Up. Act.
- April 24 Arbor Day (always the last Friday of April)
- Plant Your Tree Today: www.plantabillion.org
- www.nature.org/earthday
- April 26 John James Audubon's birthday
- Ten-year anniversary of the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Gulf Coast.

Some outcomes of Earth Day 1970:

- the defeat of several anti-environmental villains in Congress in the first "Dirty Dozen" election.
- Congress passed the Clean Air Act in December.
- passage of the Clean Water Act
- the Endangered Species Act
- the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency
- the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- the banning of DDT
- the removal of lead from gasoline
- the passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act
- the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

(source: Denis Hayes, national coordinator of the 1st Earth Day in 1970 and the founder of the Earth Day Network, in Sierra magazine for March/April 2020).

BOOKS

- Activist Theology. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza.
- American Birds: A Literary Companion. Edited by An-

drew Rubenfeld and Terry Tempest Williams.

- Climate Justice and Community Renewal. Brian Tokar and Tamra Gilbertson, co-editors, forthcoming.
- Climate Leviathan: A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future. Joel Wainwright and Geoff Mann.
- The Culture of Feedback: Ecological Thinking in 70s America. Daniel Belgrad.
- Dangerous Earth: What We Wish We Knew about Volcanoes, Hurricanes, Climate Change, Earthquakes, and More. Ellen Prager.
- Digging Up Armageddon: The Search for the Lost City of Solomon. Eric. H. Cline.
- Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger. Julie Sze.
- Erosion: Essays of Undoing. Terry Tempest Williams.
- Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change. Ashley Dawson.
- A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How To Keep Your Cool On A Warming Planet. Sarah Jaquette Ray.
- From Disposable Culture to Disposable People: The Unintended Consequences of Plastics. Sasha Adkins.
- The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-in Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation. Adam Rome.
- Health in the Anthropocene: Living Well on a Finite Planet. edited by Katharine Zywert and Stephen Quilley.
- Home in America: On Loss & Retrieval. Thomas Dumm.
- Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life. Kari Marie Norgaard.
- Red-Green Revolution: The Politics and Technology of Ecosocialism. Victor Wallis.
- Sea Level Rise: A Slow Tsunami on America's Shores. Orrin H. Pilkey and Keith C. Pilkey.
- Toward Climate Justice. Brian Tokar.
- Weather: A Novel. Jenny Offill.
- Yellow Earth. John Sayles. (novel).

EVENTS

- 50th anniversary of Smithsonian Magazine, 1970-2020
- SI Conservation Initiative at www.earthoptimism.si.edu
- Festival of Homiletics: Preaching a New Earth: Climate and Creation. Atlanta, GA May 18-20, 2020.

RESOURCES

- The American Prospect (Ideas, Politics & Power) 2019 Bonus Issue, Special Report: The Practical Path to Saving the Planet/The Urgent Realism of Radical Change.
- Climate Justice Alliance
- Inside Climate News
- US Climate Accelerator
- Women's Earth Alliance (WEA)
- Zero Hour



Pandemic references

- Corona Virus Disease-19 (2019)
- Epidemics: The Impact of Germs and Their Power Over Humanity. Joshua S. Loomis
- Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present. Frank M. Snowden.
- The Precipice, Toby Ord.
- The Rules of Contagion. Adam Kucharski. (forthcoming)