



UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

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UNITED CHURCHES OF LYCOMING COUNTY
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Issued mid-monthly, September through May. Items marked with an asterisk may be of special interest to your congregation. Deadline to submit articles - First of each month.

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April 10, 2012

Please notify us if you have a change of address

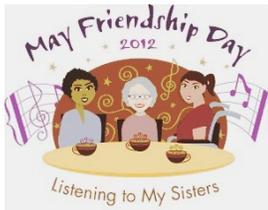
Thank You for receiving our Newsletter via E-Mail.
It is a wonderful donation of postage, office supplies and volunteer time.

Church Women United's.....

MAY FRIENDSHIP DAY *

Mrs. Regina Gross, President

The theme for May Friendship Day 2011 is "Sights and Sounds of Harmony: Listening to My Sisters". This celebration will be held Friday, May 4 at First Church of Christ Disciples, 1250 Almond Street, Williamsport, with a luncheon at noon and celebratory program at 1:15.



The lunch will cost \$8.00 per person. Reservations are needed by April 23rd and must be pre-paid.

Send checks payable to Church Women United. Mail to: May Friendship Day, Diane Casella, 407 Allen Street, Montoursville, PA 17754.

There will be an ingathering of items for the United Churches Food Pantry (a list of items most needed can be found on page 4) and pre-cut Christmas stockings will be available. This celebration will also feature the Fellowship of the least coin.

CWS BLANKET AND KIT COLLECTION*

The new and good used blankets and kits you have been getting ready should be brought to First United Methodist Church, Williamsport. Remember to use the door by the fountain at the point of Market and Packer Streets. The church will be open between 9 a.m. and Noon on Saturday, May 5 to accept and record your donations.

Offerings for transportation to a disaster site is \$2 per Blanket, School, Baby and Health Kits and \$3 for Emergency Clean-up Buckets. They can be delivered at that time or sent to the office of United Churches, 202 E. 3rd St., Wmspt. PA 17701

Your assembling of the kits is only the first step in getting them where they can help so much. The kits are taken to Harrisburg where they are then transported to the Church World Service (CWS) Center in New Windsor Maryland where they are sorted and packed for shipment anywhere in the world. The money you donate assures that they reach disaster destinations when needed.



Visit us at the following web site - www:uclc.org

FLOOD RECOVERY *

Call 570-322-7648

Work Groups are working hard in our area to help restore people's lives after the flooding this fall! When you see the yellow and burgundy banner that's God's people working together to help one of our neighbors.



We need your help, especially in the following ways...

- Refer flood victims with basic unmet needs to the committee. It's not too late!
- Volunteer to house work groups in your church.
- Volunteer to help as part of a work crew weekdays or in the evenings or weekends.
- Volunteer to provide meals for volunteer work groups.

We must work together as a community to help individuals affected by the Tropical Storm Lee disaster if we are to get the job done. Areas of focus include: clean-up, building and repair, long term personal needs - spiritual counseling and support - furniture, relocation into permanent housing.

WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHES*

Join us from 12 to 1 p.m. and you are always assured of a tasty \$6 lunch, warm ecumenical fellowship and a thoughtful program designed to enrich your life mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. The parking is free in the Pine Street lot north of the church from 11 to 1:30. No reservations are necessary, but a call to Gwen, Office-322-1110 if you are not a regular attender will help the caterer know how much food to prepare.

APRIL:

- 11- **Revs. Ken and Christine Woods-Henderson**, Northway Presbyterian Church, "*Celebrating Eastertide In Song*"
- 18- **Ms. Jamie Hoffa**, Program Representative, DeWald Chiropractic, "*How to Stay Young Your First One Hundred Years*"
- 25- **Ms. Judith Shimp**, Montoursville Presbyterian Church, "*Senior Retiree Lunch and Prayer Shawl Ministries*"

MAY:

- 2- **Rev. Bob Hickox**, Executive Director, Greater Lycoming Habitat for Humanity, "*Faith In Action*"
- 9- **Tom Wetzal and Kay Huffman**, Members of the Williamsport Music Club, "*Inspirational Messages In Song*"
- 16- **Tracy Haas**, Marketing Coordinator for Albright LIFE,

"Called to Serve Seniors"

- 23- **Jordan and Kate Egli**, Greater European Mission, "*God is Moving in France*"
- 30- To Be Announced

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet?

The number is 322-5762.

It's available 24 hours a day.



Devotions are three minutes or less, change weekdays and once on the weekend, and are designed to lift your spirits and help you to have "A Closer Walk with God." The devotionalists this winter include:

4/9-15 Pastors Jim & Kathy Behrens 4/16-22 Rev. Danesta Whaley
 4/23-29 Pastor Dorothy Anderson 4/30-5/6 Rev. Kathy Ersham
 5/7-13 Rev. Gwen Bernstine 5/14-20 Rev. Margaret Balliet

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!

**United Churches
2nd Annual Golf Tournament***

Thursday, September 27, 2012

at White Deer Golf Course

8:15 a.m. registration and refreshments

Shot Gun Start - 9:00 a.m. Format - Scramble

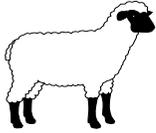
The cost per golfer is \$80, which includes the round of golf, your golf cart, and a lunch following the event.

How can you help?

- Mark your calendar and sign up if you're a golfer and develop a foursome.
- Enlist sponsors for the event.

Tournament Sponsorship:	\$500
Meal Sponsorship:	\$250
Prize Sponsorship:	\$200
Hole Sponsorship (Signs):	\$100
Church Sponsorship:	\$ 50
- Identify organizations willing to give us prizes for our golfers. Anyone with the right connections, or who has a business, should contact us if they can help.

Contacts for golfers and sponsors as well as anyone who wants to help on the arrangements committee should contact the Rev. Ken Weiss at kweiss1213@hotmail.com or at 323-6325. Please make checks payable to United Churches of Lycoming County and mail to Ken Weiss, First Church of Christ Disciples, 1250 Almond St., Williamsport PA 17701.



SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

J. Morris Smith, Th. D.,
Contact at: 322-6538

THE LANDSCAPE OF HEALTH ISSUES OF THE POOR

The poor face a variety of issues when it comes to securing and maintaining good health. I am not speaking about health care as much as health itself. There are barriers that poverty imposes on health and its maintenance that the poor face every day and most have had to contend with for generations. These barriers are not usually present in every poor family, nor are they all present in any one family. These are not all the barriers, but are representative of what can be missing in the nurture and care of children born to poverty.

Parents, grandparents, and extended family strongly influence children concerning healthy habits, personal health concerns, and attitudes toward the body.

1. Lack of knowledge of healthy habits, good nutrition, and holistic integration by important others. Healthy habits are instilled early. Appreciation of good nutrition and eating disciplines must be established early and integrated knowledgeably into the whole of growth and social development.
2. Lack of moral support from family, society, community, and social group. Disciplines must be upheld and sustained around the table and around the clock. Due to generational attitudes, most parents or peers are not in agreement as to what is important or right. So the child's willingness to submit to discipline is shattered by confusion or failure to observe the good. Support that is dedicated and influential is lessened or nonexistent.
3. Lack of social norms that strike a wholesome and balanced lifestyle. Alas, the world of the poor is unusually remiss in social norms, exemplifying unwholesome and troubled lifestyles that are attractive to those who feel they have been neglected in the pursuit of happiness.
4. Fear and embarrassment due to ignorance and superstition cause reluctance to seek proper health care and follow regimens required for healing. This is linked to #3 by anger and ambivalence.
5. Lack of access to health care systems and providers. Physicians can take only a certain number of Medical Access patients, due to the low reimbursement provided by the state. Most of the poor sick and suffering use the only other recourse, the emergency room. There is no wellness regiment that one would have with a personal or family physician. Many of the poor do not have Medical Access.

EXAMPLE: Many of the poor have diabetes because of the above issues. And many of the poor also use tobacco. This is a dangerous combination and severely effects health. Those who have diabetes and smoke are more likely to de-

velop gum disease and lose teeth, have vision problems, have higher blood sugar levels, develop kidney disease and block medication designed to prevent kidney failure, have nerve damage causing numbness and pain, need amputations of the feet and legs, and die of heart disease.

This is just one outcome of the barriers to health experienced by the poor. I see men and women in their forties and fifties who look, act, and have health problems beyond their years. This is why the Shepherd of the Streets has developed a prescription, medical needs, and oral surgery assistance ministry that has become the major outlay of funds. We beg your prayers and support.

We also encourage healthy habits to be practiced and to be taught to the children. One of the ways we do this is by providing them hygiene items, bedding and baby needs you generously donate. The list of hygiene items are:

Regular sizes please....

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Deodorant | Toothpaste and Toothbrushes |
| Soap | Shaving Cream and Razors |
| Tissues | Shampoo and Conditioner |
| Toilet Paper | Women's Hygiene Products |
| Combs | Blankets/Sheets/Pillowcases |
| Nail Clippers | Towels and Wash Cloths |
| Baby Diapers, Wipes, Shampoo, Powder, Oil, Q-Tips | |

Thank you for your support of this ministry, now beginning its 24th year (we began April 1, 1988). Your support to the Shepherd portion of United Churches general budget, to pay salaries, and expenses to keep the doors open and be available for those most in need in our community, and to advocate on their behalf is a very important.

United Churches
 Including our Shepherd of the Streets Ministry
 Is Your Church
 E - X - T - E - N - D - E - D
 In Ministry

UNITED CHURCHES FOOD PANTRY **Gail Burkhardt, Coordinator 322-1627*

As always...it's been busy! You would think we'd be all settled in our new environs. Well, unfortunately you would be way off base! Everything is unpacked and for the most part, arranged and convenient. But that's the end of the 'normal' part.

We are serving an increasing number of clients each month we've been at The Center. Our previous clients call, and make appointments plus we have 'drop ins' who throw our schedules out the window or in our case since there is no window, the door! Not a problem, just takes a little more time to attend to each person who comes in, appointment or not. But again, the volunteers rise to the occasion and make all feel glad that they have come to our United Churches Food Pantry. And most of those 'drop ins' go on to become regular clients with us.



March is the month that the Montoursville Cub Scout Pack #21 and the Boy Scouts Troop 12 and Cub Scouts Pack 12 from St. Luke's Lutheran Church devote two Saturdays to the cause of collecting food for the pantry. They take collection bags and directions to homes one Saturday and then go back the following week and collect the food. Then they go to a hall and weigh and sort. By the time it's delivered to us, all the bags have been emptied and like items boxed together and marked with their contents. It's a time consuming job and makes our work so much easier.

Again this year there was a slight drop in the amounts collected. Montoursville collected just over 1600 lbs. of food and St. Luke's collected almost 700 lbs. of food. Given the still poor economic conditions, we realize that each can of food donated is a sacrifice and affects your family food allowance. But know that by contributing to these drives by the Scouts many things are being accomplished. These youngsters are being taught responsibility, compassion for others, the 'warm & fuzzy feeling of being part of a community effort to help wipe out hunger, and they learn WWJD. All these things are HUGE! So if one of those collection bags comes to your porch, understand the bigger picture.

These collections and food collections many of you have at your Church, all go toward our goal of helping those who are 'food insecure' to feel some peace and relief even if it's only a stop gap solution to a long term problem. Foods we could especially use this month are:

spaghetti sauce	tea bags	canned fruits
oatmeal packets	saltine crackers	pork-n-beans
granola bars	mac-n-cheese	chunky soups
instant mashed potatoes	jello/pudding mixes	

hamburger helper [any flavors] spaghetti noodles
cake mixes/frosting mixes

We had a small blessing service in our new facility by the Shepherd of the Streets. The service was for clients and volunteers and makes us feel that much closer to God as we tend to His flock. Those of you who support us were also prayed for and much gratitude was shown. As always, we thank you and pray for you and encourage you to come in for a visit any time you're in the neighborhood, it's always a blessing to see you and be able to thank you personally for your kindness.

Vacation Bible School information is needed by May 1st for our newsletter listing. You can e-mail it to us at director@uclc.org or mail it in to 202 East Third Street, Williamsport, PA 17701

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRIES

Spiritual Caregiver Breakfast: April 19 will be a wonderful day of food for the body, mind and soul as area clergy, chaplains, Eucharistic Ministers, and other pastoral caregivers gather in the Education and Conference Center of the new Susquehanna Tower. The primary goal of the day is to provide area clergy and other caregivers an official welcome and orientation to Susquehanna Health's recent addition to Williamsport Regional Medical Center. Besides breakfast, participants will benefit from remarks by SH CEO Steve Johnson. In addition, the hospital chaplains will be on hand to share their experience, answer questions and provide guided tours. We will also gather in the new chapel for a time of reflection and prayer.



More than fifty people have already answered the invitation. Reservations can be made by contacting the Pastoral Care Office Administrator, Jackie Perchinski, at 321-2215. Doors open at 7:30 AM with breakfast served at 8 AM. Ample parking is available in the lots at 700 High Street. Enter through the new Susquehanna Tower main lobby and proceed to the Education and Conference center on the third floor.

Special reminder to members of the United Churches of Lycoming County Board of Directors: Our April meeting will be held immediately following the Spiritual Caregiver Breakfast program (approx. 10 AM) in the Susquehanna Tower at Williamsport Regional Medical Center.

POVERTY - A FAITH-BASED RESPONSE**from our Christian Social Concerns Committee*

Pace be with you. -Lk. 24:36 & Jn. 20:19 In the Gospels of Luke and John, Jesus first greets the disciples after his resurrection with "Peace be with you." If we are to follow Jesus' example and greet those who are living with food insecurity in our communities, nation, and the world, what do those words challenge us to do?

Lycoming County Unemployment Rate: The preliminary rate of unemployment for Lycoming County for January 2012 was 7.9%. This figure was 0.7% higher than in December 2011.

House Budget Fails Those Faced with Hunger and Poverty: In late March, the House of Representatives narrowly passed a budget proposal that fails to form a circle of protection around programs for hungry and poor people, and actually dismantles protections previously in place. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reported that the cuts in the House budget are so severe that most of the government – aside from health care, Social Security, and defense – would cease to exist by 2050. Such harsh spending cuts to reduce our deficit are unacceptable. The House budget enacts trillions in additional tax cuts and fails to take a balanced approach to deficit reduction.

Most disturbing, these cuts would have a devastating impact on programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), the Special Supplemental Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), poverty-focused foreign assistance, and international food aid. In fact, 62 percent of the cuts in this budget are to low-income programs. For more visit: blog.bread.org/2012-03/our-continued-campaign-on-the-house-budget-.html

The Time is Now for Food Aid Reform in the Next Farm Bill:

A recent article published by American Jewish World Service with the above title highlights reasons why the Farm Bill which is up for renewal might be improved so as to bring peace and security to those dealing with food insecurity. The Farm Bill contains many funding sources that can be reprioritized to allow for cuts such as subsidies for huge agribusinesses while aiding family farms and serving the needs of those facing poverty at home and in the world. Reform of the Farm Bill is vital to protect and extend programs such as SNAP, WIC, school lunch programs, foreign assistance for food crises, and other relief efforts. May we say to those in need: Shalom – Peace be with you! For the full article visit: ajws.org/who_we_are/publications-policy_briefs/time_is_now_food_aid_reform.pdf.

CREATION CORNER*from our Christian Social Concerns Committee*

Energy and Ethics: Earth Day Sunday 2012 and beyond

With secular debates on energy policy and practices come a host of questions that perhaps only a community of faith believers can address. Toward that end, consider the following and then see the Earth Day Sunday materials at www.nccecojustice.org/earthday.

How do we, as Christians...

- ✓ fuel our families, communities and world in ways that are Christ-centered and honor God's gift of Creation?
- ✓ in the complexity of the involved issues, discern how God wants us to respond?
- ✓ advocate for energy sources that provide for all without degrading the very land that God so cherishes?
- ✓ as we reflect on environmental disasters that have resulted from an economy dependent upon extraction, answer the question of "are we doing all we can to ensure that such disasters will not occur again"?
- ✓ show that we value the interests of others for clean air, clean water, and just energy sources?
- ✓ reconcile ourselves to the role our energy needs play in harming God's people and creating inequality?
- ✓ work to embrace appropriate emerging technologies that will allow us to be better stewards of God's Creation and decrease our energy consumption?
- ✓ ensure that the decisions we make regarding our energy sources include our Christian values---justice, stewardship and love for our neighbor?
- ✓ serve communities in need so that they can experience the bounty of God's good Creation?
- ✓ as people who strive for justice, sustainability and sufficiency, eliminate our own wastefulness while also advocating for others who lack access to energy?

For more specific resources, from a faith-based point-of-view, that address concerns in your region, for example, those of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") for natural gas, Gulf oil spill, Mountain top removal coal mining, Power Plant Pollution, see <http://nccecojustice.org/energy>.



Earth Day 2012, now a world-wide observance involving one billion people, is always April 22. See Earth Day Network (EDN) (www.earthday.org) for the Campaign for Communities "Global Day of Conversation" and EDN's "A Billion Acts of Green" (www.act.earthday.org). Also see www.nativeenergy.com for carbon output reductions. EDN also has a Green Schools campaign and Educators Network.

A Global Day of Prayer for Creation Care, April 26, 2012 is coordinated by the Evangelical Environmental Network (www.creationcare.org).

-continued on page 6

YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY (YPM)**Rev. Danesta Whaley, Regional Director - 326-6868****EFFECTUAL PRAYER!**

The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available (dynamic in its working) James 5:16 Amp.

Prayer is the key and foundation for all we do at Yokefellow. From the very beginning of our ministry, prayer was a central focus for reaching out to those who are incarcerated and their families. We would like to share some prayer needs with you of our ministry and invite you to co-labor with us! Please pray:

- ▶ For our faithful volunteers and board members who are committed to the ministry. Wisdom for all; the Lord to order and direct our steps.
- ▶ For all those we minister to and the seeds sown to produce a powerful harvest in their lives.
- ▶ New volunteers who have been trained to be directed and positioned.
- ▶ Our current YPM (Yokefellow Prison Ministry) structure and the new regional structure to enable us to network more with one another.
- ▶ Our first regional meeting on Saturday, April 14 from 10-2pm at our local office (1200 Almond St). Success!
- ▶ Funds for the ministry – every need met
- ▶ Expansion as the Lord opens more doors into prisons
- ▶ Aftercare for those being released from prison. Discipleship and connections.

And those things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive - Matthew 21:22

Thank you for your powerful effective prayers! If you would like to become a volunteer in our prison ministry, please contact us at the above number.

CREATION CORNER - continued from page 5

Sacred Acts: How Churches are Working to Protect Earth's Climate by Mallory McDuff is a recent book from New Society Publishers. With foreword by Bill McKibben, it is about "acting in good faith – environmental stewardship through worship, education, advocacy and action.

Film For the kids: The animated 3-D film adaptation of Dr. Seuss' The Lorax illustrates how important individual actions on behalf of the environment can be. Help a child learn that one can take personal responsibility in trying to make the world a better place.

"Renewal", the first feature-length documentary film to tell the stories of America's grassroots religious-environmental movement is now available. Order the DVD, or see the trailer, at www.renewalproject.net. It won

the Best in Fest Award at the Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival. "Renewing the Earth, Renewing Faith."

Extreme Weather: Three E magazine (The Environmental Magazine) features on "extreme weather" (also known as "freak weather", "weather out of whack") appear in their March/April issue. Web links there help us understand scientific findings. See: www.climatecommunication.org
www.wunderground.com
www.climateprogress.org
www.iea.org
www.climateapidresponse.org

Albright LIFE Age Requirement Lowered to 55

Albright LIFE (Living Independently for Elders) in Williamsport is now accepting participants as young as 55 years old due to a recent certification from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Prior to the CMS certification, participants had to be 60 or older to qualify for Albright LIFE's services.

LIFE is Pennsylvania's version of the nationally recognized Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). LIFE is an innovative program for seniors that addresses participant's increasing healthcare needs while enabling them to continue living at home. LIFE provides a nursing home level of care, but in a day-center setting. Participants are picked up from home in the morning, and returned home in the afternoon. At the LIFE center participants benefit from coordinated medical care, a wide range of therapies, meals and snacks, medicine management and social interaction through group activities.

"Home and community based services like LIFE are becoming the preferred model of healthcare," says John Ressler, executive director of Albright LIFE Williamsport. "It's important that we continue to make these services more accessible for our community members that are capable of aging at home."

Lowering the eligible age for LIFE to 55 allows individuals to benefit from preventative care, education and close monitoring of chronic conditions at an earlier age. This coordinated approach to care helps delay or in some cases may prevent traditional nursing home stays altogether. Coordinating care also helps control costs for providers & insurers.

"It's a win-win," says Ressler. "Participants receive all the care and services they need and maintain their independence, and the State is able to moderate the burgeoning cost of healthcare." Since opening in 2008, Albright LIFE Williamsport has helped more than 90 seniors age at home, and saved county tax payers over \$1.5 million.

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES *

Education: **The Interfaith Creation Care Symposium** will be, April 19 at St. Pius X Church, Selinsgrove PA from 9-2. Cost is \$10, but for those who did not register before 4/12, lunch will be on your own. Details: rivertowncoalition@gmail.com.

The **3rd Annual Billtown Film Festival** "Art, Women and the Environment" will take place at the Community Arts Center in downtown Williamsport on April 19-21. Films from local filmmakers will be featured. We will have notable films from national and international filmmakers, too. Get ready to enjoy 3 nights of great independent films. For details: <http://billtownfilmfestival.com/>.

Electronic **Recycling Fundraising Event:** Celebrate Earth Week with us by donating your unwanted electronic item to the American Cancer Society on April 20 - 21 from 8am - 2pm at Hoss's Sea & Steak House parking lot, 3rd St, Williamsport. They'll accept any electronic, but no hazardous items with acids, refrigerants or paints of any kind or microwaves. No appliances. For a monetary donation to the American Cancer Society, the Relay For Life team will even unload your car. Questions: 570-326-4149.

Giant **Yard Sale to Benefit Family Promise** will be held Saturday morning, April 21, 8-1 at the First Ward Fire Hall, Hastings Street, South Williamsport. (across from Dairy Queen - parking off Main Street). Hosted by Messiah Lutheran Church the sale will benefit Family Promise of Lycoming County. Donated items may be brought to the fire hall all day Friday, April 20 from 9-6.

THE **WILLIAMSPORT CIVIC CHORUS** will present Beethoven's Mass in C and Haydn's Mass in the Time of War on Sunday, April 29 at 3 p.m. in the Nave of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Williamsport. Tickets are available at RM Sides Family Music Center, Otto Bookstore, from any chorus member, and at the door. Adults \$10 presale/\$12 at door, Students \$8 presale, \$10 at door, children under 12 free with a paid adult.

National **Day of Prayer:** A service will be held at the Community Arts Center, on Thursday, May 3 at 7 p.m. It will be "a concert of prayer" on the theme "Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the Lord" - Psalm 33:12. Come and be part of "a multitude of worshipers for the Audience of One." You are invited to "come be part of a growing community of "Worshiping Warriors", fighting the good fight of faith in prayer and supplication, to the end that, much will be accomplished when we pray.

FREE **clothing exchange** will be held at Messiah Lutheran Church in South Williamsport on Saturday, May 5, 8-11 a.m. As you clean out your drawers and closets

while doing your Spring Cleaning, please consider donating gently used items for the exchange. We will accept summer and winter clothing for both children and adults. Please bring only those items that are in good repair and suitable to be worn! No money will change hands. All are welcome to come "shop" our exchange! (Even if you have nothing to bring, please come and take what you need!)

Calling all **Captive Free fans!** Cross Fire, YouthEncounter's International Team Ministry Band, will present a contemporary Christian concert at Messiah Lutheran Church, corner of W. Southern Ave. and Howard St. in South Williamsport, on Sunday, May 6. All ages are invited to this family-friendly concert.

Cross Fire is composed of five young adults who commit to a year of ministry through music and depend on offerings and other donations to support their ministry as they tour in the U.S. and internationally to share the gospel. The band is currently touring in Africa and is eager to share their experiences with our community. The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a cross-cultural concert. A brief campfire-style worship service will follow at 7:45 p.m. A free will offering will be taken.

HEALTHY **FAMILIES 2012** will be a day of fun & resources for the entire family! It will be held Saturday, May 19th at the Pickelner Arena, Williamsport YMCA from 10 -2, hosted by the Williamsport YMCA, Comfort Keepers, and the Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition. Resources will be available to families living and working in our County. Everything from nutritional information to activities and clubs will be available. The goal is to educate and enlighten our residents on everything available to them in Lycoming County.

Summer Recreation:

Some ideas for congregations to engage youth

- Sponsor a child to attend camp for a week.
- Provide scholarships for a child to attend day camp.
- Support your local swimming complex and help provide reduced memberships for kids.
- Form a car-pool to get kids to a recreation program.
- Incorporate recreation in your VBS. Activity that increases blood flow to the brain enhance learning.
- Extend the day from the morning VBS program and go to a park and/or swimming pool after lunch.
- Consider opening your pool to more than family.
- Take kids on hikes, outings to state parks, & places they may not ordinarily have an opportunity to visit.

UNITED CHURCHES CHALLENGE 2012

“HomeMade Missions”

The Board of Directors of the United Churches of Lycoming County is always astounded by the many and varied ways that our congregations reach out and make a difference in our community. We are uplifted by the ways we have chosen to work together as a county council of churches and as community ministeriums - and we are amazed and encouraged by the things we do in our own county.

The Gospel of John records Jesus praying for His disciples as they conclude the Passover meal in the upper room. Jesus prays, “I ask not only on behalf of these disciples, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one. As you, Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” John 17: 20-21. Jesus’ vision for us, his disciples who would follow was a vision of unity. Not a vision of similarity ... where each of us are cookie cutter images of each other. He never asked for James or John or Peter or Thomas or Andrew or any of the original band of disciples to be just like the other. He saw each of their gifts. So too, each of us and each of our traditions have many distinct gifts to be grateful for. But Jesus has blessed us with His vision of unity, of being part of His family. Get to know one another! Enjoy one another! Work together! Rejoice with one another! Grieve with one another. Help one another! Bless one another!

Our hearts are warmed as we watch congregations reaching out with this vision of unity in our county. Our 2012 Challenge continues to highlight ways we make life better for our neighbors. They illustrate what United Churches is all about. This is the third article to highlight examples of what we call “HomeMade Missions” which come out of the heart and soul of our congregations. These efforts are local, indigenous and respond to human need as perceived in the challenging words of Jesus to love our neighbors. This month we spotlight the:

JOURNEY HOUSE

In early 2006 members of New Covenant United Church of Christ felt the leading of the Spirit to seek out a way, or ways, to reach out and connect in service to the wider community. The “Connect” committee was formed, commissioned, and assigned the task of connecting with non-profit organizations and churches in the community in an attempt to discern what needs were not being met by other organizations. The committee was repeatedly told there was no place for homeless families to go until they could become self-sufficient again. During that time an apartment building adjacent to the church parking lot became available for purchase. The members wanted to buy the building and use it for some form of ministry. As the Connect Committee was continuing to make connections with non-profits they ended up meeting with Rosann Pelleschi, the chair of the Family Housing Alliance. The Spirit was truly at work as the FHA was looking for a facility to help implement their plans for a transitional living facility. New Covenant United Church of Christ formed a non-profit entity, New Covenant Community Connections, INC (NC3) and purchased the building. Through the volunteer work of many individuals and the cooperation of num-



erous agencies, grants were applied for; the building was gutted and remodeled into four apartments, two of which are handicapped accessible. Journey House program was born and the first program participants moved in during November, 2007.

NC3 and the Housing Alliance continue to provide oversight for Journey House while case management services are provided in partnership with STEP, Inc. Applications for Journey House are currently being made through the Housing Alliance member agencies. The length of time in Journey House depends upon the needs and goals of the participants as they enter the program for self-sufficiency. Average length of stay is about one year. As of March 1, 2012, 17 families, 52 individuals which include 24 adults and 28 children have resided in Journey House. Thirteen of the 17 families have completed the program (met their goals and abided by the rules of Journey House).

Looking back we are truly amazed and grateful for the movement of the Spirit during, and continuing, this ministry.

Does your congregation have a mission you think could be uplifted and featured?

Please contact Gwen at United Churches, 322-1110 or director@uclc.org

Watch for another spotlighted HomeMade Mission in May

and see one of the ways God has worked with our Roman Catholic Community recently.