



UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

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UNITED CHURCHES OF LYCOMING COUNTY
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Please notify us of changes of e-mail address

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

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY NEWS

We gathered around tables at Redeemer Lutheran Church to celebrate 69 years of the ministry that we do together and to get to know each other better. The delicious broasted chicken dinner and hospitality of the congregation certainly blessed us that evening as we celebrated some of the ways we work together today, and the ways God uses all the ministry that we do individually to be the church in Lycoming County in these times.

The staff was recognized and thanked for their excellent work. Each passionately works with many of our congregations to help them build relationship to work together in ministry and to better understand each other.

- Mrs. Patty Gohrs, United Churches Adm. Assistant
- J. Morris Smith, Th.D., Shepherd of the Streets
- Ms. Toni Fogal, Shepherd of the Streets Adm. Asst.
- Mrs. Tammey Aichner, Campus Ministry Coordinator
- Rev. Gwen Bernstine, Exec. Director, United Churches

Memories were shared of the ministry we provided this year as the reports in the annual book were commended.

-continued on page 2



The Staff, Officers and Board Members of United Churches hope that you and those for whom you pray experience the blessings of peace, hope, joy and love during your Advent and Christmas journeys.

May we all be open to receive anew and share with others these blessings that only He can bring, at Christmas and every day of the year.



Follow us and others at "United Churches of Lycoming County" & "Walking With God in Lycoming County"

NEWS FROM THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY -continued from page 1

- Our Pantry has settled into their new space at the Msgr. Castellano Center of St. Joseph the Worker Parish. We serve an ever increasing number of people, in the first 10 months of 2015 providing emergency food for 3789 people. Our Coordinator, Gail Burkhart, passed away unexpectedly this October. Her leadership and delegation has allowed volunteers to ably keep the pantry running smoothly, as we search for new leadership.
- Our Shepherd Ministry brings hope to those in need, and draws them closer to God. They reached over 4,250 in the past 12 months. They are now also located in the Msgr. Castellano Center.
- Over 90 volunteers went to nursing homes, assisted living centers, hi-rises and our county prison to provide over 850 services this year. This year several services will be reconfigured to fit the needs of the facilities.
- Our Campus Ministry has doubled in size this year. Students really enjoy the Pastors who come in from the community to lead bible studies on Monday evenings. Students are making friendships at our events that carry them through the tough times of college life. They also love the outreach projects on and off campus.
- Church Women United continues their outreach, just packing 1500 Christmas Stockings for area nursing homes and the children served by Project Impact.
- Educational Ministries provides opportunities for all of us to become more informed. The committee continues working on Suicide Prevention.
- Our media ministries provide opportunities for clergy to share messages in the newspaper, and congregations to get information out on Facebook.
- The Interfaith Panel provides students in the Williamsport school district with an opportunity few people ever get; to have leaders from four different faith traditions to answer their questions. They will also accept your invitations to speak with your group.

Our Financial reports show the money provided to keep offices open and staff paid lags behind the money given to provide client assistance. Even after reconfiguring hours for the Shepherd position for the second half of last year we were not able to balance those expenses.

We are especially grateful for the 5th Annual Golf Tournament that raised about \$11,000 (thank you Rev. Ken Weiss and your excellent committee!) We do need to have more fund raisers, big and small, throughout the year.

A 2016 budget of \$166,585.00 was approved.

Elected to the Board of Directors were: members at large: Rev. Brad Walmer, Rev. Brad Brumbach, Pastor Scott Koser, Rev. Sam Hwang, Mrs. Barbara Horn; treasurer Mr. Wes Miller. Those who've moved to new positions are Rev. Ashley Rossi and Ms. Delores Loner. The following persons have either moved out of the area or are rotating off the board at the end of the year and were thanked for their service, Ms. Karen Fabroni, Rev. Brian VanFossen, Mrs. Madeline Bird, Rev. John Charnock, Mrs. Carol Waltz, Mrs. Alyssa Maneval, and Mr. Jim Foran.

The Ecumenical Service Award honored and celebrated the ministry of an individual in our midst.

- **Mrs. Madeline Bird** a member of Resurrection Catholic Church, Muncy. She has spent her lifetime providing leadership and support in her church as well as making a more abundant life possible for her community. In all that she does you see her strong and consistent vision of compassionate service in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her hospitality led to the establishment of a bereavement committee in her congregation. Her energizing presence and long-range planning has made lasting contributions in her congregation and her community. Madeline is concerned for the nurture of children and youth in the community and compassionate concern for diverse members of society. Each of the points illustrating Bird's compassion or hard work was listed on a plaque presented to her. Each bullet point was a purple iris, her favorite flower.

The focus of the evening was the role that churches can play in the conversation of refugees coming to the U.S. and how they can make a difference. Roberta Updegraff, a freelance writer for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, was the speaker. The topic of refugees, especially those from Syria, has come to the forefront of national debate. Bobbi joked that she writes schmaltzy stories that get people to donate money. What she actually does is travel throughout the world, immersing herself in areas that are experiencing, or have experienced, a disaster, and reports on it.

Bobbi noted that leaving politics aside, all of us, all religions, have been in the refugee business even before 1945 when the mandate was written by the United Nations that never again would we turn refugees away.

Every year the United States accepts between 70,000 and 85,000 refugees, 5% of whom come to Pennsylvania. Texas takes 10%, California takes 9% and New York takes 6% of refugees. The conversation Bobbi incited did not lead the religious men and women in the room to ask, "Should we take these people in? Should we aid them?" but rather "Now that we know they are here and they need help, how do we go about aiding them."

The theme of the night molded into the concept of the stranger in our midst, a concept introduced in Hebrews 13:2. The Bible repeatedly speaks of welcoming strangers. During discussions, the importance of personal experience was stressed. We see and we hear people talk about refugees, but we don't meet them, we don't get that one-on-one with them to learn about their experiences. Personal contact would go a long way to further understanding. Churches can use Jesus as the model for this. The action has to be relation-based. Jesus, through his personal ministry, was one-on-one with people, willing to be risky and vulnerable and sometimes defy tradition to do what was right.

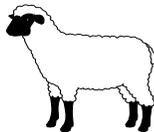
The evening closed with a prayer service lifting up the many refugees around the world and those who are reaching out to them and those who have been affected by the terrorist attacks earlier that week in Paris and in many other areas of our world.

SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

J. Morris Smith, Th.D.,

570-322-6538, shepherd@ucl.org

THE CELEBRATION OF MERCY



Advent has begun and we will soon celebrate the most astounding event in the history of mankind...the Christ-event, when God took on human flesh to normalize divine attributes for those whose divine image and likeness would be redeemed. The Incarnation of the Son of God serves to make evident that humans were created in the image and likeness of God. Whereas, the Cross stands at the summit of salvation history, it is the Birth of Jesus that centers us on redemption history, how God came in human likeness as chief paradigm of His own character.

Of all the attributes of God, it is interesting that one in particular has become the standard of the Christmas season. Love, Light, Peace, Joy, etc., are all acknowledged during this celebration, but it is Mercy that becomes most evidenced in behavior. People will give time, talent, and treasure extraordinarily, seek to serve in some capacity that satisfies this divine inclination. Serving the poor, especially the homeless, and most especially children comes to the fore during this season. Even unbelievers feel this stirring within. No wonder commercialism of such a holy season has proliferated to the chagrin and embarrassment of most of us, for such does not represent true mercy, but most often self desire and/or resentment. No wonder the image of the jolly elf who brings toys and technology has taken the place of the Holy Babe, swaddled and lying in a manger, who brings rebirth and divine potential to all born of natural generation.

Mary's song immediately spoke of this mercy when she greeted Elizabeth: "His mercy is from age to age to those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly. The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped Israel His servant, remembering His mercy according to His promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to His descendants forever." (Lk 1:46-55)

Mercy sees beyond rules of conduct and bits of character to intent and consequence and emits a purpose rather than judgment, a passion for deliverance and reconciliation. Mercy is not ruled by fairness, but by favor (grace) which is attributable to God alone, extending grace that is beyond human perception, refrains from demanding a return, but rather forbears in charity and compassion ever ready to forgive.

Lack of concern, compassion, or charity often masquerades as mercy, seeking to mask legalism, scrupulosity, anger, or fear. True mercy declares no personal intent other than love, no motive other than grace, and no hope other than reparation. From its first vibrations, mercy determines rescue, declares clemency, and assumes the human capacity for rebirth and revival, transcendence and transformation, always yearning itself from a divine nature.

Mercy can make final judgment on no one, but mercy and justice must entwine with hope, making a three-fold cord strong and able to bundle God's grace with man's faith, anticipating the better with an optimism that provides peace presentiment of heaven.

Listen to the first conversation about that holy night. (Angels) "And this will be a sign for you, you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests. (Shepherds) Let us go, then, to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

Merry Christmas! Holy Life!

We thank all who collect hygiene items, bedding, and baby needs for us. The list of hygiene items we use follows, and are regular sizes of:

<i>Deodorant</i>	<i>Toothpaste and Toothbrushes</i>
<i>Soap</i>	<i>Shaving Cream and Razors</i>
<i>Tissues</i>	<i>Shampoo and Conditioner</i>
<i>Toilet Paper</i>	<i>Women's Hygiene Products</i>
<i>Combs</i>	<i>Towels and Wash Cloths</i>
<i>Baby Diaper</i>	<i>Baby Shampoo, Powder, Oil</i>
<i>Baby Q-Tips</i>	<i>Baby Wipes.</i>

FOOD PANTRY ***Mona Rundio, Coordinator 570-322-1657****E-mail - foodpantry@uclc.org**

Welcome is a word I often hear at the pantry. It's heard as a greeting as someone comes through the door. It's heard after someone has says Thanks and their kind acknowledgment is greeted with approval. And now "**Welcome Mona**" will be the words on everyone's lips when they come in the pantry door.

Mona Rundio has just accepted the position as our Food Pantry Coordinator, and she begins this Monday, Dec. 7th. Mona lives in Montoursville with her daughter Autumn. They are active members of Montoursville Presbyterian Church. She has a background in hotel and restaurant management and is looking forward to joining the team at the Pantry, meeting each of you and learning how everything works there. So drop by and ... **welcome Mona!**

We welcomed members of St. Ann's Parish to the Pantry the week of Thanksgiving. They provided a special blessing for family units of three or more persons. Their Care Committee had applied to the Diocese of Scranton for a grant to provide 75 Thanksgiving Baskets. These baskets were packaged in reusable, colorful bags filled with all the components for the Thanksgiving meal, and included a gift card for a turkey. Because of their show of respect, love and care for the less fortunate, St. Ann's Parish made Thanksgiving brighter for many clients.



As you can imagine we continue to be busy at the Pantry. We work hard keeping up with the traffic and restocking shelves. Thanks to your generosity, we can welcome every client and send bags of food home with them.

We do need some help with items that run low:

canned meats pop tarts jello pudding
peanut butter saltines instant potatoes
graham crackers canned fruit hamburger helper

The 450-475 people that we assist each month are very appreciative that you care about their well being.

Please remember to check the date on donations. I was cleaning out my cupboard the other day because I can no longer eat dairy and chocolate, and as I looked at the dates on the boxes and cans, only one would be welcomed.

Stop by to welcome Mona and introduce yourself. Remember we are at the rear of 320 Park Ave. in the Msgr. Castellano Center. Hours are Mondays 9:30-Noon for donations and Tuesdays and Thursday 10-3 for client services. The pantry will be closed between the holidays.

Souper Bowl Sunday is one way to help our United Churches Food Pantry, or other groups in our area, to assist people in need. It is an effort to glorify God and care for "the least of these" by each worshiper giving a can of food or the cost of a can of food (\$1) on Super Bowl Sunday (February 7, 2016) and some do it for the three weeks before.

Groups call 1-800-358-7687 on the day of the game (between noon and 5 p.m.) to report the amount collected, then send your funds/food to the charity of your choice. Reporting your collection enables the full impact of this simple act of caring to be determined and announced.

In 2015 the grand total generated was \$8,049,3859 collected in cash and food items by 6,680 groups, for their charities. Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990 and since then they have received reports of over \$100 Million in cash and food items being donated. Be part of this modern day miracle by getting your congregation on board. For details go to: www.souperbowl.org.



Tammy Aichner, Coordinator, ucm@uclc.org

November was a busy month for Campus Ministry. We were blessed with two new pastors to facilitate Faith Talks, Pastor Brad Walmer from New Covenant UCC and Pastor Ashley Rossi from Redeemer Lutheran. We also welcomed back a favorite in Pastor Joel Long from Tabernacle Baptist. Thank you to all of our Fall semester pastors. We could not do this without you!

In my report that I submitted for Annual Assembly, I listed a number of churches and individuals that have helped since I started 2 and a half years ago with Faith Talks. It has come to my attention that I inadvertently left out Pastor Danesta Whaley from City Church. I apologize to any others that I may have missed. It is all on me and not a reflection of lack of appreciation.

On November 22nd, we prepared and served a meal at Sojourner Truth. A few members of The Harbor volunteered their services and joined us. What a great time we had. Thank you to Pastor Velinda Webb and her congregation's hospitality. Their cook let us take over the kitchen without complaint.

Look for an order form next month for our Soup sale. We are planning a mission trip to South Carolina and funds from this sale will help make it possible

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet?
The number is 570-322-5762.
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:

12/7-13 Pastors Jim & Kathy Behrens 12/14-20 Mrs. Tammey Aichner
12/21-27 Mrs. Patty Gohrs 12/27-1/3 Rev. Gwen Bernstine
1/4-10 Pastors Jim & Kathy Behrens 1/11-17 Mrs. Sandy Grier

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!

WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHES*

Join us Wednesdays for lunch and a interesting program! The lunch line opens about 11:45 a.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 at the United Churches Office 570-322-1110 if you are not a regular attender will help the caterer know how to prepare.



When winter weather makes travel difficult on Wednesdays call Gwen at 570-419-1464 or 570-323-5911 to know if Ecumenical lunch has been cancelled.

DECEMBER

- 9- **Mrs. Lucy Henry** and **Mrs. Wendy McCormick**, two of our favorite musicians will be bring flute, Celtic harp, hammered dulcimer to make beautiful music. *"Wendy and Lucy Together Again"*
- 16- **The Rev. Kevin Brophy**, Pastor, Salladasburg United Methodist Church, *"The Story of the Carols We Love"*
- 23- Christmas Holiday: No Lunch Scheduled
- 30- New Year Holiday: No Lunch Scheduled

JANUARY

- 6 - **J. Morris Smith, TH.D.**, Shepherd of the Streets, *"The Epiphany"*
- 13- **The Rev. Cynthia Dallas-Kirk**, Pastor, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Williamsport,
- 20- **The Week Of Prayer For Christian Unity**, Rev. Gwen Bernstine, United Churches, *"Called To Proclaim The Mighty Acts of the Lord."*
- 27- **Mrs. Pat Wittig, Mrs. Barbara Allen and Mrs. Velna Grimes**, Church Women United Ecumenical Action, *"Reaching out to Nursing Home Residents"*

PROJECT BALD EAGLE'S FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

New Year - New Hope is our emphasis for January. We are asking every church and faith community to choose a week to offer prayers and support for those dealing with heroin and opioid addiction, as well as their families and others affected by this epidemic. "New Year – New Hope" is our emphasis for the month.

The purpose of the Faith-based Initiative is "to facilitate healing of spirit through the power of God's love." We believe that the power of transformational prayer is key to the hope and recovery of those with addictions, and essential to undergird the efforts of everyone involved in Project Bald Eagle (formerly known as the Heroin Task Force).

We have resources available for your use, including a prayer card that can be printed and used as a bulletin insert and suggested litanies for your worship service. For more information on the Faith-based Initiative Sub-committee, contact chairperson, the Rev. Andrew France (amfrance@comcast.net). For information on resources for your worship service in January, contact Karen Barraco (kbar-raco@windstream.net). Note: Several pastors have expressed interest in doing it as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on the fourth Sunday, 1/24/16.

Additional Events to watch for:

- February 23 (Tuesday): Prayer Breakfast
- April 17 (Sunday): Community Prayer Walks
- Sunday School Curriculum on Drug Prevention
- More Prayer Services at Susquehanna Health System

VOLUNTEER NOW FOR 2016 MINISTRIES*

We are pulling together the ministries schedule for 2016. It's a big job-over 850 services. We can't do it without you. Both clergy and laity are needed. We have services yet to fill in the following places



Nursing Home and Assisted Living Center Worship:

- Sundays at 2 p.m. weekly: Rose View Center
Manor Care South and Valley View
- Sundays at 2:15 weekly: Manor Care North (2 services)
- Sundays at 3: Weekly - Williamsport Home (2 services)
- Monthly-The Meadows, Elmcroft, Hillside, Loy Cr RNC
- Wednesdays at 10:30 weekly - Loyalsock Creek RNC
- Thursdays at 11 am. weekly - Presbyterian Home

Prison Worship Services (Sundays weekly)

Lycoming County Jail - 1:45 and 3:15 p.m.

Please contact us at uclc@sunlink.net or call 570-322-1110 if you are able to help in 2015!

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

And she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7). There is “no room” for some who are homeless in our communities. There are many more in the world who are economic migrants seeking a better way of life. Currently there are many refugees fleeing violence that’s occurring in various regions of the world. These individuals and families are seeking safety and security. What does Luke’s description of the circumstances of the birth of Christ challenge us as to how to respond to current needs?

The Cost of Hunger:

A new study commissioned by Bread for the World Institute shows that last year alone, hunger and food insecurity increased health expenditures in the United States by \$160 billion. The study is highlighted in the Institute’s new report, *The Nourishing Effect: Ending Hunger, Improving Health, Reducing Inequality*.

“Nowhere are the hidden costs of hunger and food insecurity greater than in health care,” said Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. “Access to nutritious food is essential to healthy growth and development, and can prevent the need for costly medical care. Many chronic diseases – the main causes of poor health as well as the main drivers of healthcare costs – are related to diet.”

Food insecurity is associated with higher rates of depression, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other physical and mental health conditions. Food assistance programs such as SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) and school lunches save money in the long run by improving educational and health outcomes.

Government resources that could go toward programs such as early childhood education or reducing the national debt are instead spent in emergency rooms and hospitals to offset the costs of hunger and food insecurity. The \$160 billion is equivalent to more than a third of the U.S. government’s annual deficit.

The study was carried out by John Cook of Boston Medical Center, Children’s HealthWatch, and Ana Paula Poblacion of Universidade Federal de São Paulo in Brazil.

“The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure has never been more appropriate,” said Asma Lateef, director of Bread for the World Institute. “Investments in federal nutrition programs are critical and much more needs to be done to ensure that vulnerable and underserved communities have access to healthy foods.”

Ending hunger and food insecurity will allow millions of people to do better in school, be more productive at work, and live healthier lives. The Nourishing Effect offers recommendations for healthcare providers, anti-hunger advocates, and policymakers to help make a healthier, hunger-free U.S. a reality. (Source: www.bread.org/-library/cost-hunger)

Watch Night Service: Bethel AME Church, 601 Hepburn Street is hosting this service on December 31st from 10:30 p.m. until 12:15 a.m.. Rev. Cynthia Dallas-Kirk would like to have many people from many congregations participate in the music, choirs, readings, prayers and refreshments.

The first Watch Night Services were celebrated in Black communities in America in 1862 and were often known as Freedom’s Eve Services. On that night, Black slaves and free blacks came together in churches and private homes all across the nation awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation actually had become law. At the stroke of midnight, it was January 1, 1863; all slaves in the Confederate States were declared legally free. When the news was received, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as many people fell to their knees and thanked God.

Blacks have gathered in churches annually on New Year’s Eve ever since, praising God for bringing us safely through another year. It’s been over a century since the first Freedom’s Eve and tradition still brings us together at this time every year to celebrate “how we got over.” This celebration takes many African American descendants of slaves into a new year with praise and worship.

Please plan to attend. To participate in the service or help with refreshments please contact the church at 570-322-1198 or BethelAMEChurch_Williamsport@msn.com.

CLASSIFIEDS:

Prie Dieu (Prayer Bench): Solid oak frame double kneeler with open front. Measures 42" wide x 33" high x 28" deep with removable burgandy 4" foam padded kneeler. Asking \$70. Call 570-435-3323.

Solid Black Pulpit Robe: Bell sleeves with wide cuffs. Pleated front with full front zipper. Chest size 42-46. Asking \$45. Call 570-435-3323

Stole: White PAX (needs dry cleaned), Asking: \$5. Call 570-435-3323.

CREATION CORNER*from our Christian Social Concerns Committee*Supporting Environmental Groups
and New Year's Resolutions

You consider yourself a responsible steward of the environment. In your household you have installed CFLs or LEDs, insulated, reduced your car trips, etc. Your church has done an energy efficiency audit and implemented clean energy technologies as part of its "bottom line ministry."

The investments you have made are reducing your energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. Your consciousness and concern for climate stabilization has increased, and you appreciate the Pope's environmental encyclical and the U.S. Clean Power Plan proposals. As the U.N. Conference of the Parties 21 (COP21) climate change talks take place near Paris, you are asking yourself: "What else might I do?" You realize that to change everything, it takes everyone.

Consider supporting the following groups and their endeavors, perhaps as part of your end-of-the-year charitable giving, or as New Year resolutions for 2016.

- **Audubon Society** seeks to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.
- **Defenders of Wildlife** protects imperiled species from extinction, such as sage grouse, bison, wolves, desert bighorns, polar bears, sea turtles, Florida panthers, manatees, shorebirds, sea otters, etc. It also protects wildlife refuges and defends wild plants in their native communities.
- **Environmental Defense Fund** encourages legal strategies for less fertilizer pollution, higher standards in chemical safety laws, a reduction in fugitive methane emissions, stricter regulations of CO2 emissions in the aviation industry, and more ways for wild milkweed to be protected.
- **Food and Water Watch** raises concerns for water and other dangers due to fracking, seeks legislation to ban fracking on public land, strives to ensure that food is rigorously tested to keep contaminants off our tables, and seeks to ban the misuse of antibiotics in livestock.
- **Friends of the Earth** acts to have integrity in our food system by saving crucial pollinators (bees/butterflies), calls for curtailing bee-toxic, neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics), promotes awareness of genetic engineering (GMOs), has published a Cruise Ship Report Card rating cruise lines on environmental practices, and examines the corporate polluters' money trail in government.
- **Natural Resources Defense Council** helped raise questions about the "tar sands invasion" (pipeline menace, explosive risk, dangerous cargo, mountains of waste), and helps protect monarch butterflies and bees, wolves, grizzlies, marine animals, and helps to ban the import and sale of ivory in the U.S.
- **Ocean Conservancy** wants to save habitat (sea ice) for polar bears, arctic seals, bowhead whales, walrus; searches for measures to protect sea turtles, dolphins, and the ocean health by reducing carbon emissions and acidification; promotes sustainable fishing policies and practices. It urges its members to adhere to 15 ways of living responsibly in considering the land-sea connection, remembering that everything flows downstream, and by not recklessly engaging in shoreline recreation.
- **Union of Concerned Scientists** has a current project to urge the reduction of heavy-duty truck global warming emissions by 40% by 2025. Currently tractor trailers go only about six miles on a gallon of diesel.
- **The Wilderness Society** mission is to ensure that future generations will enjoy the clean air and water, wildlife, beauty & opportunities for recreation & renewal provided by pristine forest, rivers, deserts & mountains.

Other efforts: ASPCA, American Farmland Trust, Earth Island Institute, Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, Energy Justice Network, Greenpeace, Humane Society, League of Conservation Voters, National Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy, PETA, Rainforest Action Network, Sierra Club, Student Conservation Association, Waterkeeper Alliance, World Wildlife Fund, Xerces Society, and your local bioregional watershed groups.

Educate yourself, do your research. Do any groups receive government or corporate money? How are they rated by non-profit charity scorecards on spending their money? Does their work include practical technology and science based solutions? Be wary of efforts to suppress or distort science for political purposes. Be an advocate and inform, inspire and empower others to speak and act for the earth.

(verse here from the hymn Come, Lord and Tarry Not: Come and make all things new, Come, save this longing earth; Transform all creatures in your love, Creation's second birth.)

YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY (YPM)

By Rev. Danesta (Nessie) Whaley: 570-326-6868

THANK YOU



We appreciate each of you who supported our fundraiser at Hoss's Restaurant in November. Because of your attendance and some donations, we raised \$200!

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Williamsport Civic Chorus Celebrates “Glorious Christmas” on Sunday, December 13th, at 3 pm. They will team with a brass choir, percussion, and organ to present a “Glorious Christmas”. John Rutter's ever-popular Gloria is the centerpiece of this concert. The rest of the program at St. Mark's Lutheran Church (142 Market Street in Williamsport) will feature Daniel Pinkham's Christmas Cantata and a number of well and lesser-known Christmas arrangements by Eric Whitacre, Ola Gjeillo, and Pavel Tchesnokov. Tickets for this uplifting performance may be purchased at The Otto Book Store, Robert M. Sides Family Music Center, and at the door. As always, children ages 12 and under will be admitted without charge. More information is available at www.williamsportcivicchorus.org.

Nine Lessons and Carols Service will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 844 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, on Sunday, December 13 beginning at 4 pm. Modeled on the annual celebration at King's College, this service features traditional congregational carols and anthems presented by Trinity's Choir, Choral Scholars, and guest musicians. For more information: 570-322-0126 or www.trinity-williamsport.diocpa.org.

Celebrate Recovery: A Christ Centered Program! Find freedom from hurts, habits and hang-ups. Sundays at 5 pm at the Evangelical Center, First Church United Methodist, 604 Market St. Williamsport.

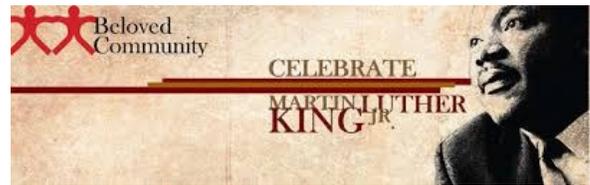
Meal Packaging Event to be hosted by Messiah Lutheran Church in South Williamsport will be hosting a meal packaging event on Friday, April 1, 2016. A meal packaging event is when a group of volunteers come together and package 20,000 or more protein fortified macaroni and cheese meals that are then given to a Food Bank for distribution to those who hunger in our counties free of charge. The meals cost \$0.25 each to package and need to raise a minimum of \$5,000.

Outreach, Inc., which provides the materials and guidance in hosting a meal packaging event, is having a contest to support our efforts in the coming year. A generous contributor has offered to match donations people have contributed to meal packaging events.

They will also be needing many volunteers to help at the event. Work is available for all ages and abilities! More information regarding volunteers for the event will be published after the first of the New Year. In the meantime, please donate - and please share this news in as many ways possible to help us raise awareness and to raise funds! For more information, contact Kathy Wither at 570-326-9171, x203

or wither15@comcast.net.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. EVENTS



Monday, January 18, at 9:00 am there will be a Peace Walk in honor of the **Martin Luther King Day of Service**. It will begin at the Dr. Yasui Peace Monument on the corner of Little Little Blvd. and Pine St. with parking in Municipal Lot G. We will walk on 4th St. to Penn College of Technology, Bush Campus Center, gathering there at 9:30 for a volunteer registration and brief rally. The Penn College shuttle bus will then return walkers to their cars at 10:00 am. MLK Day Service Projects begin after 10:00 am as volunteers go to assigned local social service centers to perform various tasks in small groups. Volunteers will be assigned to:

- Firetree Place
- West House
- Family Promise of Lycoming County
- American Rescue Workers
- Saving Grace Shelter
- North Central PA Food Bank in Williamsport
- West End Christian Community Center
- United Churches Center City Food Pantry
- Salvation Army - Lock Haven and Williamsport
- New Love Center Food Pantry (Jersey Shore)
- Sojourner Truth
- Footprints of Montgomery, Inc.

Nontombi Naomi Tutu will be speaking on Wednesday, January 20 at 7:00 pm - at Klump Auditorium at Penn College. Naomi will be speaking on “Our Shared Humanity: Creating Understanding Through the Principles of Martin Luther King, Jr.” She is the author of “The Words of Desmond Tutu”. A book signing to follow event, which is free and open to the public.



West End Christian Community Center has seen a real need for warm clothing and coats this fall. Consequently their stock is almost gone. Please consider cleaning out a closet or two and sending your gently used clothing to the Clothes Closet to the WECCC, 901 Diamond Street, Williamsport.

Fifth Unity Gathering: I can't say this enough; When I think that I may have seen it all, God shows me more of who He is. There were Blessings and Favor at the fourth gathering. The Holy Spirit truly was in the House of the Lord showing unity and love among the pastors and people through serious discussion and prayer.

Again, I would like to thank each and every pastor that was able to attend! Each time I leave our gathering, I will say "I'm a different person". The fifth gathering is on December 13, 2015 (Sunday) the time will be 6:30pm at River Valley Fellowship which is located at Bethel AME 601 Hepburn Street. By the post office.

We will be doing scripture from the New Testament (Book of Ephesians)). Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. And if you wonder where this is going please come out or you are going to miss it.

I pray everyone's schedule will allow them to be there. Please invite a pastor, minister, evangelist, deacon/deaconess, church members, husbands, wives. And remember let's keep God in the equation as we cannot do this without Him giving us direction.

God Bless, your friend in Christ...Ron Johnson

A Family and Teen Enrichment Program is coming soon called **The Strengthening Families Program**. It is especially designed to help parents, caregivers, and their children ages 10 to 14 navigate the early adolescent years successfully.

This seven week program is for 5th 6th and 7th graders and their caregivers and will be held Thursdays from 5:30 to 8 p.m. starting February 4 at Williamsport Area Middle School. It is free and dinner and childcare for younger siblings will be provided. There will even be weekly gifts and prizes.

All youth transitioning to the teen years experience new stressors such as new peer influences, a more demanding school curriculum, added responsibilities, and increased opportunities for independent decision-making. In addition, youth are exposed to many media influences and often confusing messages from TV and the Internet. During this time of growth, it is important to strengthen family bonds and to help youth learn life skills to focus on goals and become responsible young adults.

Register now for the Strengthening Families Program and join us in fun family activities that promote communication and strong family relationships. Contact 570-321-3146 or ldfogelman@susquehannahealth.org.

Christmas Dinners:



- Monday, 12/21 from 11-12:30 (Christmas Ham) at the West End Christian Community Center Soup Kitchen.
- Thursday, 12/24 from 5-6:30 pm at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1407 Allegheny St, Jersey Shore.
- Friday, 12/25 from Noon - 3 at American Rescue Workers: in their 2nd floor dining room at 643 Elmira Street, Williamsport. Delivery is available only to shut-ins and handicapped persons by calling 570-323-8401 ext. 110 by Thursday at noon.
- Friday, 12/25 from Noon - 1 at St. Anthony's Center, 125 East Willow Street, Williamsport. Delivery is available for shut-ins (call 570-326-2244 by 9:30 am on 12/25)
- Friday, 12/25 from 11:30 - 1 Christmas Dinner at Sojourner Truth Ministry, 501 High Street, Williamsport. (A Christmas Party will also be held on Thursday, 12/24 from 11:30 to 1)

American Cancer Society seeks volunteers. If you have a desire to help others and are available two to four mornings or afternoons each month, the American Cancer Society can use your services. These volunteer roles would be at the Susquehanna Health Cancer Center or the American Cancer Society office, 1948 E. Third St. At the cancer center, volunteers will visit with people while they're waiting for cancer treatments and inform them of the services and programs the society has to offer. The Cancer Center provides a site for the American Cancer Society so that people with cancer can receive direct access to information about how the society can help them through their cancer journey. No experience is required, just a willingness to help others. The society office needs people who are able to serve as receptionists - answering phones and greeting visitors. Computer experience is helpful, but not required. Training will be provided. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Jolie Gibson at 570-326-4149 or jolie.gibson@cancer.org.

2016 RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS / HOLIDAYS CALENDAR

This listing, though selective and incomplete, highlights religious feasts, festivals and other observances. It is offered with the hope that awareness will be fostered special days celebrated by other Christian Traditions and some celebrations of other Faiths present in our community.

KEY: (PC) Protestant Christians, (RC) Roman Catholic Christians, (OC) Orthodox Christians, (C) Christians [All], (E) Ecumenical. Other religions in our area - (M) Muslim, (J) Judaism (I) Interfaith (N) National

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
1 - New Year's Day --	2 - Meeting of Christ in the Temple OC	4 - World Day of Prayer (CWU) E
6 - Epiphany/Theophony C	7 - Souper Bowl Sunday E	17 - St. Patrick's Day C
10 - Baptism of Jesus C	7 - Four Chaplains Sunday C+J	20 - Palm Sunday PC & RC
18 - Martin Luther King Holiday I	7 - Transfiguration C	24 - Purim J
18- Day of Service (Penn College)	9 - Shrove Tuesday PC & RC	24 - Maundy Thursday PC & RC
18-25 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity E	10 - Ash Wednesday PC & RC	25 - Annunciation of Virgin Mary RC
20- MLKing Event (PCT) Naomi Tutu	12 - Great Lent (Triodion) Begins OC	25 - Good (Holy) Friday PC & RC
	14-20 Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week I	27 - Easter PC & RC
	15 - Pre Lenten Service E	
	23 - Prayer Breakfast (Recovery) I	
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
17 - Recovery Prayer Walks I	1 - Pascha (Easter) OC	6 - Ramadan begins M
23 - Lazarus Saturday OC	5 - Yom Ha Sho'ah J	9 - Ascension OC
23-30 - Passover (Pesach) J	5 - National Day of Prayer I-USA	12-13 Shavuot J
24 - Palm Sunday OC	5 - Lailat al Miraj M	19 - Pentecost OC
29 - Holy Friday OC	5 - Ascension RC	26 - All Saints Day OC
	6 - May Friendship Day (CWU) E	
	15 - Pentecost PC & RC	
	22 - Trinity Sunday PC & RC	
	22 - United Churches Sunday E	
	23 - Lailat al Bara'ah M	
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
4 - Independence Day USA	6 - Transfiguration OC	8 - Birth of the Virgin Mary C
7-9- Eid al Fitr - Ramadan Ends M	14 - Tisha B'Av J	11 - Memorial Bike Ride I6
	15 - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary RC+OC	11-14 - Hajj Ends - Eid al Adha M
		14 - Holy Cross Day RC+OC
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
2 - World Communion Sunday E	1 - All Saints Day PC+RC	1 - World AIDS Day I
2 - Muharram - New Year M	4 - World Community Day Pgm E	6 - St. Nicholas Day OC
3-4 - Rosh Hashanah J	13 - Stewardship Sunday E	8 - Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary RC
4 - Saint Francis Day RC/PC	15 - Advent Begins (Winter Lent) OC	20 - Last Sunday of Advent C
9 - CROP Walk I	20 - Christ the King PC+RC	25-1/1 - Chanukkah J
12 - Yom Kippur J	21 - Entry of the Theotokos OC	25 - Christmas C
17-23 Sukkot J	24 - Thanksgiving I - USA	31 - Watch Night C
	27 - Advent Begins RC+PC	

NOTE: Celebrations of the Jewish and Muslim holydays begin at sundown the preceding day, and end at sundown on the holyday.