

# UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

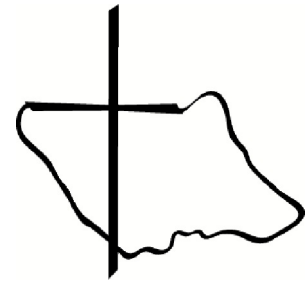
Published Monthly by the

**United Churches of Lycoming County**

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Rev. Gwen N. Bernstine, Executive Director and Editor



*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.*

Volume XXVIII      Number 12

December 13, 2011

## ANNUAL ASSEMBLY NEWS

**W**e gathered around tables at Pine Street United Methodist Church to celebrate 65 years of the ministry that we do together and to get to know each other better. The meal and hospitality of the Pine Street congregation certainly blessed us that evening as we remembered our history, celebrated our present ministry, and dreamed of ways each of us could reach out in new ways ecumenically.

Two Ecumenical Service Awards were presented this year to honor and celebrate the ministry of individuals in our midst.

- The Reverend R. Kenneth Weiss is the pastor of First Church of Christ Disciples. His favorite scripture, "Do onto others as you would have them do onto you." is reflected in the ways he works for peace in our world through reconciliation among all people. He is an energizing presence and leader within United Churches ministries, especially the Interfaith Dialogue Commission and CROP Walk and our first annual Golf Tournament. His compassion for all God's people is evident as he provides meeting space for many groups in our community and supports the United Churches Food Pantry, the Shepherd of the Streets Ministry, and the Williamsport/Lycoming Habitat For Humanity. Ken enjoys mentoring children and youth and serving on the

*-continued on page 6*

*The Staff, Officers  
and Board Members  
of United Churches  
hope that you  
and those for whom you pray  
experience many blessings  
during your Advent and  
Christmas journey.*



*May we all be open to receive anew  
the love, joy, peace and hope  
that only He can bring,  
at Christmas and every day of the year.*

**T**hank You: Our United Churches Office Secretary/Administrative Assistant, Linda Winter, is retiring the end of the year after twenty-five years of service. She will take on the demanding job of full-time grandmother. We thank her for her faithful service and wish her many years filled with God's blessings.

Visit us at the following web site - [www.uclc.org](http://www.uclc.org)

**FOOD PANTRY \****Gail Burkhart, Coordinator 322-1657*

**T**hese past few months have been a struggle at our Food Pantry. As you know, we've had to stop serving clients at Sojourner Truth (our home for over a decade) due to plumbing issues. We are grateful for your patience and generosity in the midst of many transitions.

My biggest concern is our clients. This is a tough time of year to worry about having enough food for supper. The American Rescue Workers has helped, giving emergency food supplies to our folks. We've arranged two monthly food distributions, November at Mater Dolorosa and December 8<sup>th</sup> at The Center. The work involved in getting food packed and moved to another location is incredible. Thank God, we have amazing volunteers, and also men from the Pre-Release Center on hand to make it work! So even if 'our family' is a little dysfunctional right now, we're working together to be sure our clients get food.

Then... as you know, we're looking for a new 'home'. That's continues to be interesting, I've gotten to see many beautiful churches and several Human Service Agencies who have been kind enough to have us look at their facilities and still we look. There are so many criteria involved including having the bus line near-by, the ability for bulk food to be delivered, available parking, not too many steps for clients and volunteers to carry food, and affordability.

Did you see the news story about our plight on WNEP, channel 16? Maybe through networking, one of the suggestions will just be a perfect fit for us and we'll be able to get settled, either temporarily or permanently and in the New Year we'll be able to resume a more normal routines.

Meanwhile, we need prayer to continue under these unusual circumstances, to serve God's children, to continue the beautiful fellowship that our volunteers share and to do God's will. We appreciate your help especially during this beautiful season of Advent as we prepare for the coming of the Baby that would save us all. As always, know that we, too, will be praying, for all the above and for you, the caring, loving fellow Christians that support us! Have a blessed and safe holiday season. Take time to spend with family and friends and for yourselves. Enjoy!

**S**ouper Bowl Sunday is one way to help our United Churches Food Pantry, or another pantry in our area, to have more food to give to 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 5, 2012). Groups call 1-800-358-7687 on the day of the game (between noon and 5 p.m.) to report the amount collect, 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 2011 the grand total generated was \$9,583,338 by 15,235 groups. Be part of a modern day miracle by getting your church on board. More information go to: [www.souperbowl.org](http://www.souperbowl.org).

**WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHES\***

**J**oin 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 p.m. No reservations are necessary, but a call to Gwen if you are not a regular attender will help the caterer know how much food to prepare. (Call Gwen at 419-1464 to check for snow cancellation.)

**DECEMBER:**

- 14- **Revs. Kevin Brophy and Gwen Bernstine**, Area Pastors, *"It's Beginning to Sound a Lot Like Christmas"*
- 21- **Mr. and Mrs Carl Schlapi (Opal)**, Area Musicians *"Christmas Songs"*
- 28- **No Lunch Scheduled - Happy Holidays**

**JANUARY:**

- 4- **Rev. Gwen Bernstine**, Executive Director, United Churches, *"Living Fully in 2012"*
- 11- **Rev. David Fishel, BBC**, Chaplain, Susquehanna Health System, *"Near Death Experiences"*
- 18 and 25 - **Rev. Dr. John Piper**, Retired United Methodist Pastor, and Rev. Dr. John Charnock, Supervisor, Susquehanna Health System *"Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Understanding War in an Age of Terrorism and Unity in an Age of Radical Diversity"*

This is a ministry that everyone in our congregations and community is welcome to participate in. Make plans to join us and you're welcome to bring a friend!

**DIAL - A - DEVOTION \***

Have you called yet?  
The number is 322-5762.  
It's available 24 hours a day.



**D**evotions 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 fall include:

12/12-18 Rev. Dan Kovalak	12/19-25 Rev. Kathleen Ehram
12/26-1/1 Rev. Gwen Bernstine	1/2-8 Revs. Jim and Kathy Behrens
1/9-15 Rev. Margaret Balliet	1/16-22 Rev. Gwen Bernstine
1/23-29 Rev. Ken Wagner-Pizza	

**Listen today and tell others about this ministry!**

**SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS\***

**NATIVITY of POVERTY** by J. Morris Smith

*[Jesus taught holy poverty with the use of social poverty in parable, teaching, and participation.]*

Who is this baby disavowed in such a wretched place?  
 No room, no light, no loving crowd,  
 For anyone it's not allowed, this cave bereft of grace.  
 No cry from Him, this child so still. The light of moon is all  
 That shines its sheen where sheep do mill.  
 She swaddles him against the chill in this cold cavern stall.  
 Instinctively she strips the cloth and wraps Him with content.  
 Death's cold, blind shroud she did escape;  
 It now becomes His only drape, unknown to her intent.  
 Could she have known again the call would come amid the gloom?  
 She'd wrap her son within a pall,  
 When He would die for one and all, and place him in death's tomb?  
 Is this the One who God would send...the maker of all space?  
 Could this be He the prophet's meant?  
 The King of Kings in this poor pent? The Savior in this place?  
 Oh, surely not, this lowly choice...could He be lower down?  
 Could this child be the Father's Voice?  
 So far from angels who rejoice...no splendor, no renown?  
 No place to lay his rightful claim in this earth's den so poor.  
 No bed, no pad...who should we blame?  
 No nurse, no toy...who should we shame? No privacy, no door.  
 Stone feeding trough for cradle yet, a smell that cows have left,  
 This place where only beggars let,  
 For harlots and where gamblers bet; has God become bereft?  
 Or could it be, just could it be, that in this stricken place  
 The child of hope has place the key  
 To all the fears that threaten me...yes, me and all the race?  
 For in such lowly chamber bin I know that I am caught.  
 For here I fear the wage of sin  
 And here I am among all men most frightened to be sought.  
 For I can see no meaner place for Jesus to be born,  
 Than in my heart, no worse disgrace  
 He'd bear to suffer in the face of my poor state forlorn.

A far worse place He has endowed to claim his destiny...  
 Alone amidst the jeering crowd,  
 There rejected, cry loud, "have you forsaken me?"  
 I have no place for Him to lay, 'tis I who should be blamed!  
 I have no blanket-laden bay,  
 Nor even soft sweet smelling hay. All inside me is maimed.  
 Now look at what I have within for him to lay his life:  
 The residue of mortal sin,  
 No baser place or darker den, so full of self and strife.  
 A beggars place, a harlot's rue, a gambler's heart is here!  
 Where can I hide? What can I do?  
 This light-filled cave will give the clue and make the way most clear.  
 For He came down, this God of might, and chose the worst of stage  
 To say to all who fear the light,  
 "I choose the cradle of your plight...embrace you in your cage."  
 Perhaps my life is not too low, my sin not too far gone  
 That He could come and bring his glow,  
 That He would feel contented so and birth himself in me.  
 Greatest fear is what's feared within, that in my chamber lies  
 The grit, the grime, the smell of sin  
 And lie and rage and boast therein, this gross and evil sty.  
 'Tis easier, this holy day, to once again supply  
 And decorate our rotted bay  
 With tinsel and with lights array, and on our own rely.  
 'Twould cost us dear to have him here...our ways, desires, and loves.  
 This is the price, the price so dear,  
 Of life, of need, of conscience clear...of salvation from above.  
 Sweet Jesus, Holy Child, I break...I take nativity  
 Here in this heart, my stable take...  
 Virgin rest, babe sleep...peace make: Sweet Holy poverty.  
 Oh, infant King, come now this day, oh, Son of David, do,  
 Come use my cave, my trough, my hay...  
 It's all I have, so take Your lay, be birthed in me anew.  
 For I have seen how much You gave to see Your love expressed,  
 On the cross and in the grave,  
 So why not now in this poor cave...Your incarnation bless.

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

**A**nd she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. -

**Luke 2:7** Recent reports about homelessness in Lycoming County reveal a worsening problem. People of faith have established and in recent years expanded homeless programs. However, the need grows, owing to recent flooding and the needs of gas workers coming to the area. As we commemorate Jesus' birth let the plight of the Holy Family inspire us to do even more for those in need.

**Lycoming County Unemployment Rate Increased in**

**July:** The preliminary rate of unemployment for Lycoming County for September 2011 was 7.4%.

**Failure of the "Super Committee" Threatens the Poor**

**Even More:** The inability of the Congressional committee charged to establish targeted deficit reductions over the next ten years means that unless Congress takes new action across-the-board cuts will automatically take place in 2013. This means that some programs that help the poor and which were excluded from consideration of cuts by the Super Committee will receive cuts. Food stamp funding (SNAP) will expire in 2012. The food stamp program is one of the most important supplemental programs that aids families living in poverty.

**Poverty in Lycoming County – How are we doing? –**

**Very Poorly!** The U.S. Census Bureau recently released data on poverty rates. Lycoming County's poverty rate is higher than the national and state percentages for 2010.

National	State	Lycoming County
15.1%	13.4%	18%

The figures measured in numbers for **Child Poverty** are even more disturbing especially at a time that we are celebrating the birth of the Christ child.

National	State	Lycoming County
22%	19.1%	27.6%

In our county 6,600 children lived in poverty in 2010.

**New Calculations for "Poverty" by U.S. Census Bureau:**

In November, the U.S. Census Bureau released a long awaited revision of the way in which poverty is calculated. The existing standard which had been devised in the 1960s was inadequate. For example, for senior citizens medical expenses – a major item for many elderly – was not factored. The new formula now includes medical expenses. Not surprisingly the percentage of elderly living in poverty will show a significant increase the next time poverty data is calculated.

**Chronic Unemployment:** Economists and workforce development experts are increasingly calling attention to the long term impact of chronic unemployment – lasting six months or longer. The high unemployment rates since 2008 have left many out of work for prolonged periods. There are numerous reports of employers ignoring job applicants with extended unemployment. Locally and nationally people of faith need to advocate for the needs of those out of work. Jesus would clearly be their advocate. What about us?

**SEXUAL ABUSE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

With the high-profile Penn State sexual abuse case rising to national headlines, the YWCA Northcentral PA recognizes a need for education and awareness. When situations such as these occur, children can feel scared and confused because someone they know and trust has violated them. According to the Dept. of Justice, "one in four girls and one in six boys will experience sexual violence before their eighteenth birthday." These numbers are astonishing, but each day we work toward a brighter future. Penn State University made a statement that the negligence of bystanders to rape will not be tolerated, and there are things we as a community can do to help those in need.

While some signs of abuse are obvious, many are not. Behavioral changes such as bed-wetting, headaches, mood and emotional changes, inappropriate sexual behavior or increased talk about sexuality can be considered warning signs. It is important to note the offenders often try to not leave visible or obvious injuries to avoid detection.

- Victims of rape often suffer in silence, many do not reach out for help and support until years after the crime has been committed. When male victims are involved, there is even greater shame and stigma attached, isolating the victims more.
- Often times incidents of rape are not a one time occurrence. Where there is one victim, there are likely others. We as a community have the responsibility of providing victims with safe, respectful ways to report rape.
- Perpetrators are often those we know and trust, which makes abuse dangerous & unpredictable. It is important to stay informed and aware of signs of sexual abuse.

The tragic events reported to have occurred in the Penn State case have prompted community conversations. Let this be the onset of personal responsibility for everyone, as we work together to prevent the continuation of abuse, and increase awareness and support for victims of sexual assault.

For information or assistance: WISE OPTIONS Adult and child counseling, Education and awareness outreach, Emergency Shelter, Legal and victim advocacy, 24 Hour Crisis Hotline (570) 323-8167 or (800) 326-8483.

**CAMPUS MINISTRY \***  
**Sharon Comini, Coordinator,**  
[ucm@uclc.org](mailto:ucm@uclc.org)

**B**y the time you read this newsletter, the students at Penn College will be home for Christmas break. The students have been busy getting ready for finals.

United Campus Ministry participated in the Giving Tree that was held on campus to benefit children in the area. We used our bake sale money to buy Christmas gifts for two children. Everyone had a great time shopping and we were happy to help out. We also participated in the annual Christmas card activity that was open to all student organizations. Students and advisors were busy painting 4x8 boards with their Christmas message. United Campus Ministry's message was a simple one, but very powerful. The board read,

**"This Christmas, receive the best gift of all...JESUS."**

On the board was painted half of a pine tree in the snow and the other half of the tree was the cross. There was small gift box on the cross filled with scriptures declaring the Good News of Jesus. Students were able to take a scripture verse with them. It was our way to let Christ's love shine at Penn College this holiday season. All the Christmas cards were displayed on campus with a special lighting ceremony led by Penn College's President.

A special thank you to all who helped put together study bags for students, especially St. John Lutheran Church in Jersey Shore. We were blessed with enough for the college students and for children at The Center. Overall, 150 study bags were given, each filled with snacks and prayers. It was a fun way to feed the body as well as the soul this season.

We are sad to say goodbye to two of our students who will graduate December 17th. Victoria Frick will get her associate degree in Social Work. She has worked with Family Promise and other organizations during her time at Penn College. Joe Sewalk will get a certificate for Culinary Arts. He completed his internship with Le Jeune Chef. Congratulations to both of you.

Watch for more information in January about our annual soup sale event. That is one of our main fundraisers for UCM. Any congregations or individuals who would like to make soup for this event, please contact me.

May the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Savior, be in your hearts and minds, and may the Lord richly bless you and your families in 2012.

**CREATION CORNER**

*from our Christian Social Concerns Committee*

**Creation and Consumers with a Conscience**

**A**s you sow, so shall you reap. -Gal. 6:7 How do we plant seeds of hope for the environment with the money we spend? What kind of world do we buy? Is

our institutional investing "environmentally responsible"?

We know that consumers influence corporate behavior by their purchases. Boycotts influence policy (e.g., against apartheid, or on behalf of migrant farmworkers). We look beyond what is inside canned food by reading labels (sugar, salt, fat, additives, etc.) asking what is inside a company---its corporate social responsibility (e.g., charitable giving and community outreach, women's and minority advancement, defense contracts, nuclear or renewable power, etc.).

Opposite "mindless consumerism" are consumers with a conscience. They look for a "made in the USA" or union labels to gain a level of confidence that workers producing the product do so in environments that meet health and safety requirements.

Looking at the web site of a company or by calling their toll-free phone number, can help assess their effort to reduce their environmental impact, from their responsible stewardship of natural resources as raw materials, to the emissions from production and transportation, packaging waste, etc.

For investors, either as individuals or as religious institutions, "socially" or "environmentally" responsible investing ("s-r-i" or "e-r-i") is the key search tool phrase for one to "Google" to begin to educate oneself on this issue. Just as churches historically have avoided investing in alcohol, tobacco and gambling, today we can look at an annual corporate report to shareholders to help us understand the environmental impact of our investments. What is the company environmental policy about risks and opportunities; energy efficiency efforts; what its products and services do to improve the environment; is their clarification/disclosure about greenhouse gas emissions; has it been sued in any lawsuit about environmental crimes, etc.?

In addition to choosing an "sri" or "eri" stock/mutual fund investment portfolio, another way to promote a social good, to earn a financial return on investments compatible with ones moral/ethical values, is by using shareholder rights. Proxy votes can prompt companies to make changes. "As You Sow" ([www.asyousow.org](http://www.asyousow.org)) publishes an annual "proxy preview" that compiles shareholder resolutions for major corporations. "According to Moxy Vote ([www.moxyvote.com](http://www.moxyvote.com)) a web site that lets shareholders vote on issues they care about, the most supported proxies in 2011 focused on hydraulic fracturing, coal combustion waste and sustainability reporting." (See "E" magazine, [www.emagazine.com](http://www.emagazine.com) for Sept/Oct 2011, "Money Matters" column.)

**Resources:** *Get Real: What Kind of World are you Buying?*, by Mara Rockliff. Running Press, 2010, with an excellent bibliography of print, video and Online resources. <http://mararockliff.com/getreal/html>. See web sites for Dow Jones Sustainability Index; Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility; and [www.ceres.org](http://www.ceres.org) as examples of efforts in this field.

**FLOOD RECOVERY \***

**U**nited Churches has opened the Lycoming County Long Term Disaster Recovery Office to help facilitate our community's response as local congregations, denominations service providers and government agencies work together. Our goal is to provide coordinated management of the long-term recovery to Tropical Storm Lee through additional long-term assistance to individuals affected by the disaster who do not have adequate personal resources for basic needs as a result of the disaster. Areas of focus include: clean-up, building and repair, long term personal needs - spiritual counseling and support - furniture, relocation into permanent housing. The number we can be reached at is 570-322-7648 to request assistance, to volunteer, or for more information.

**SAFETY REMINDER\***

**A**s you are rushing about this holiday season, please remember that the time spent in your vehicle is time to be spent focused on driving. If you talk on the cell phone or text, tune the radio, reach for things on the dash, seat or floor, fix your hair, eat, drink, smoke, or argue when you drive, then you are driving distracted. Driving demands your full attention. If you do anything that takes your focus from the drive, pull over, or do it BEFORE or AFTER you drive. And always buckle up. It's your best defense against distracted, drowsy or impaired drivers.

**Special Note:** On December 24<sup>th</sup>, a new law goes into effect – Drivers and passengers under age 18 will have to wear a properly adjusted and fastened seatbelt. Children under age 8 must be secured in a child restraint system. Violating this law is a primary offense.

-This information is provided by the Community Traffic Safety Project.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**File Cabinets:** Several Old Metal File Cabinets are available. Contact Trinity Episcopal Church, Williamsport. Call them at 570-322-0126.

**CHAPLAINCY POSITION:** Freedom House Ministries is seeking a licensed minister or pastor to join them in serving the juvenile placement and mental health facilities in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Eight to fifteen hours a week are available. They currently are looking to fulfill two part time permanent positions and two substitute positions. If you are truly interested in serving the Lord and are excited about his goodness and want to show it to others, please send your resume and qualifications to 1700 Memorial Avenue, Williamsport PA 17701

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY .... Continued from page 1

Board of Directors of The Center. He is willing to go where few dare to tread as he engages the community in dialogue on issues of diversity and justice, especially regarding religious beliefs, sexuality and family life. He uses his prophetic voice to provide editorials uplift important causes and helps counteract prejudices in our community. Ken also witnesses daily to the universal love of God for all people, through your commitment to Reform Judaism and your understanding of Interfaith issues as a priority in our pluralistic society.

- The Reverend John F. Piper, Jr., Ph.D. was honored for the ways he exemplifies his favorite scripture "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you". Dr. Piper, who is retired from Lycoming College where he served as Professor of History and Academic Dean, and is also a retired United Methodist Pastor who served actively for over 40 years, has a strong vision of God's "Amazing Grace" that has served as a theme for the way he has live his life. John has been active in ecumenical groups wherever he has found himself. He has been a constant advocate for education, encouraging everyone to make learning a constant part of their lives. He faithfully tells and preserves our faith story through books, articles, dramatizations, lectures and courses; as well as in area and denomination histories.

The story of 65 years of working together in ecumenical ministry is indeed something to celebrate! We began as 24 congregations and now have 180 willing to work and pray together and learn more about each other. This year has been interesting. The board of directors, congregations and community have embraced the 2011 Challenge, raising \$33,806 in extra funds to see United Churches continue.

People have said, "It's important to work together! United Churches ministries are important!"

Our Financial report shows that we need to continue to be on a four day a week schedule for our ministries that used to be open five days a week, but because of your overwhelming support, we are able to give staff who have been working so hard, a 5% increase in pay for the first time in years. A 2012 budget of \$147,064.71 was approved.

More news from the assembly next month.

OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

**G**erman Christmas Service: You are invited to a Christmas Service in the German language on Saturday, December 10, at 6:00 PM St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Quiggville.

**W**yoming Seminary College Preparatory School An informational display will be available at First United Methodist Church, 602 Market St. Muncy, from Jan 15-29. It will be available on Sundays as well as weekdays. The school is in the Wyoming Valley and the display will be designed for parents who might want to consider enrolling their children.

**H**ABITAT UPDATE: You may have recently seen in the Sun Gazette, one of the Habitat homes caught on fire Wednesday night, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Thankfully the home was empty! Unfortunately the Carpenter family was scheduled to move into the home in two weeks – right before Christmas.

The Fire Marshall believes the cause was electrical. The fire started in the attic and burned through the roof and the second floor ceiling. The house appears to be a total loss due to fire and water damage. Habitat's insurance should cover everything, but they will need to demolish the existing structure and rebuild.

Please keep the Carpenters in your thoughts and prayers as they work to rearrange their plans. Habitat will begin building a new home for them as soon as the ground thaws in the spring. If you are interested in helping to construct the home, contact Habitat today at 570-322-2515 or [www.lycominghabitat.org](http://www.lycominghabitat.org).

**M**arch for Life 2012: The Susquehanna Valley Chapter of Pennsylvanians for Human Life (SVC-PHL) will once again host charter buses to the grassroots March for Life in Washington, D.C. on Monday, January 23, 2012. To reserve your seat today or for more information contact Bob Stein at 570-584-2947 or Evelyn Rall at 570-398-0722. Buses will depart from Beiter's in Williamsport and from Big Lots by the Lycoming Mall in Muncy promptly at 6:00 a.m. A donation of \$15/person is requested; however, if this is a problem for individuals where many members from the same family wish to attend, please let them know that and they are willing to work with you. Donations to be used to pay for the buses are also encouraged. You may mail the check made payable to SVC-PHL, addressed SVC-PHL, P.O. Box 144, Williamsport, PA 17701.

**J**OURNEY TO BETHLEHEM: will be presented by the Newberry Church of Christ, 822 Diamond Street, Williamsport, on December 17 and 18 from 6-8 p.m. This event is free to the public and is a simple but dynamic presentation of the Christmas story that will take you through the streets of Bethlehem. You will witness the unfolding of the story of the first Christmas. Local actors and actresses, artists, scenery, costumes and live animals will combine to bring the story and the true meaning of Christmas to life. Angel guides will lead groups of 5 - 10 people through a 25-30 minute tour of the "Streets of Bethlehem. Refreshments will be served and a special gift bag will be given to each family (while supplies last) that comes to visit.

YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY

*Rev. Danesta Whaley, Council Director - 326-6868*

BEHOLD, WE BRING YOU TIDINGS OF GOOD NEWS!

The good news of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! The good news that He has given us a mission to go into all the world and preach the gospel...

We count it a JOY and privilege to share HIS light and the good news as we GO into the prisons to share weekly that Jesus came to bring hope to those whose lives seem shattered. Although it is a difficult time of the year for most, the men and women come out to a time of study of the Word and sharing with those around the Yokefellow Circle. This brings them a light in the darkness. Yes, they are truly grateful as I heard this past week from one inmate. The volunteers who serve in our prison ministry are just as blessed (even more) than those who sit behind the prison walls. We each take and receive something.

The men and women in prison come voluntarily and are not forced to join in, but realize there are great benefits. One such benefit is when the volunteers pray for a need one has and together they see that prayer answered. Recently, one man who had not had a visit from a family member since incarceration several months ago, unexpectedly was called out to say 'you have a visit'. Sure enough, a parent had come to visit! What a benefit of the prayer answered.

Won't you share in the Good News with Yokefellow Prison Ministry by your active participation? We need volunteers to serve as well as finances to continue our ministry. Your tax-deductible gift –Yokefellow Prison Ministry 1200 Almond St., Williamsport, PA 17701. May you have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

**2012 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	2 - World Day of Prayer (CWU)	E
6 - Epiphany/Theophony	C	5 - Souper Bowl Sunday	E	8 - Purim	J
9 - Baptism of Jesus	C	5 - Four Chaplains Sunday	C+J	25 - Annunciation of Virgin Mary	RC
16 Martin Luther King Holiday	E	13-19 Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week	I		
18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	E	19 - Pre Lenten Service	E		
		19 - Transfiguration	C		
		21 - Shrove Tuesday	C		
		22 - Ash Wednesday	C		
		27 - Great Lent Begins	OC		
APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
1 - Palm Sunday	PC/RC	3 - National Day of Prayer	I-USA	3 - Pentecost	OC
5 - Maundy Thursday	PC/RC	4 - May Friendship Day (CWU)	E	3 - United Churches Sunday (Trinity Sun)	C
6 - Good (Holy) Friday	PC/RC	17 - Ascension of Christ	PC/RC	7 - Corpus Christi	RC
7 - Passover (Pesach) Begins	J	24 - Ascension of Jesus	OC	10 - All Saints Day	OC
7 - Lazarus Saturday	OC	27 - Pentecost	PC/RC		
8 - Easter	PC/RC	27-28 - Shavuot	J		
8 - Palm Sunday	OC				
13 - Holy Friday	OC				
14 - Passover (Pesach) ends	J				
15 - Easter/Pascha	OC				
19 - Yom HaSho'ah	J				
JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER	
4 - Independence Day	N	6 - Transfiguration	OC	8 - Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary	C
20 - Ramadan expected to Begin	M	15 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	RC+OC	14 - Holy Cross Day	RC+OC
29 - Tish B'Av	J	19-21 - Eid al Fitr - Ramadan Ends	M	17-18 - Rosh Hashanah	J
				26 - Yom Kippur	J
OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER	
1-7 - Sukkot	J	1 - All Saints Day	PC+RC	1 - World AIDS Day	I
7 - World Communion Sunday	E	1 - World Community Day Pgm	E	2 - Advent Begins	RC+PC
14 - Laity Sunday	E	11 - Stewardship Sunday	E	6 - St. Nicholas Day	OC
14 - CROP Walk	I	15 - Advent Begins	OC	8 - Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary	RC
		15 - Hijj - New Year	M	9-16 - Chanukkah	J
		20 - Christ the King	PC+RC	23 - Last Sunday of Advent	C
		21 - Entry of the Theotokos	OC	25 - Christmas	C
		22 - Thanksgiving	I - USA	26-1/1 - Kwanzaa	--
				28 - The Holy Innocents	C
				31 - Watch Night	C

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