

UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

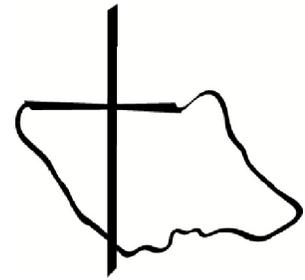
Published Monthly by the

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

January 10, 2012

BEGINNING THE YEAR ECUMENICALLY - by Rev. Dr. John Charnock

The Ecumenism and Evangelism Department of United Churches actively promotes the observance of the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** held annually January 18-25.

Special gatherings of the **Wednesday Ecumenical Luncheons** will provide an appropriate beginning and ending of this year's celebration around the theme "The Church of the Bible and the Church of the World. Discussion will be led each Wednesday by the Rev. Dr. John Piper and the Rev. Dr. John Charnock.

Background reading for this observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a National Council of Churches document entitled *Christian Understanding of Unity in an Age of Radical Diversity*. This may be downloaded at http://ecumenicalvisions.org/home/?page_id=5 or you may receive one by contacting United Churches.

There are number of opportunities to celebrate this Week of Prayer...

1/18 and 25 - Both **Ecumenical Lunch** programs at Noon at Pine Street United Methodist Church, 441 Pine Street. Dr. Piper and Dr. Charnock are

both looking forward to joining them for lunch (\$6) and program. If you are not a regular attendee please contact UCLC - 322-1110 or director@uclc.org to help us prepare.

1/18-25 - **Special Devotions** for each day will be available on our Telephone Devotion Line, reachable 24 hours a day at 322-5762.

1/20 - **Service of Prayer at Holy Cross Orthodox Church**, 1725 Holy Cross Lane (Next to St. Ann's Catholic Church on Northway Rd. And Sheridan St.) Friday at 7:00 p.m. All are invited to attend. A fellowship time follows.

This department also looks forward to the 30th annual **Pre-Lenten Celebration** which will be held February 19 at Christ United Methodist Church, Hughesville, with Msgr. Glenn McCreary as our speaker. Look for more information on page 4 of the newsletter.

A special feature of this year's ecumenical work will be a **Spring Gathering of Local Clergy** in the Williamsport Regional Medical Center to tour the Susquehanna Tower and worship in the new hospital Chapel.

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

UNITED CHURCHES FOOD PANTRY **Gail Burkhart, Coordinator 322-1657*

Our Food Pantry has exciting news as we begin this New Year! We are starting our move to The Campbell Street Center this week! The address is 600 Campbell Street, on the corner of Campbell St. and Memorial Ave. in Williamsport. It's a huge job but we're all looking forward to having some more space, parking, restrooms and no steps for our clients (or volunteers) to navigate. We really appreciate the enthusiastic welcome of Hank Mitchell, Executive Director, the Staff and Board of Directors. We look forward to working closely with them.



Our time at Sojourner Truth Ministries was a time for development, good fellowship and spiritual growth. However, plumbing issues caused us to look for a new home.

So here we go, to a new environment that will be close to our client base and will provide opportunities to expand our services to more folks in need. These next two weeks will be devoted to packing food supplies from our shelves, cleaning shelving and storage units, defrosting and cleaning appliances and then moving and installing everything at our new home. Then ... settling in. Just as when you move to a new house, we anticipate that we'll have a period of adjustment and 'tweaking' our way of doing things but with the wonderful and resilient volunteers and willingness of our clients to adapt, I think it will go well. We're all looking forward to getting back to a normal food distribution schedule. These months have been difficult and of course our concerns that our folks weren't getting enough food was worrisome.

We give our most sincere thanks to both Mater Dolorosa and The Center for hosting us for pre-packed bag food distributions for November and December. They personify the meaning of ecumenism in every way. Our thanks, too, to the folks at the American Rescue Workers who gave emergency food to our clients in need. They are so easy to work with and so willing to help in every way. Kudos to each of you for all the assistance!!

Next month I'll have an accurate idea of what foods we need. We do ask for your continued prayers that God will bless our ministry and of course anyone who is interested in helping with our moving project, please call either the Pantry number, 570-322-1657 or my home, 570-322-5234 and leave details as to your availability. We will need folks who are physically able to bend, stoop and lift moderate amounts of weight. A lot of the work can be done during the day but we will probably work a few evenings and definitely be physically moving on the next two Saturdays.

Thanks for 'hanging in' with us. We're looking forward

to this next chapter in our Food Pantry history! Happy New Year and many blessings each day of this new year!

Souper Bowl Sunday is one way to help 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). Be part of a modern day miracle by getting your church on board. More information go to: www.souperbowl.org or call 1-800-358-7687.

FLOOD RECOVERY *

We have 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 once again, is to provide coordinated management of the long-term recovery. Working together our community will be able to help individuals affected by the Tropical Storm Lee disaster who do not have adequate personal resources for basic needs. 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**.

Please use this number to request assistance, volunteer, or for details.



Welcome Patty! There's a new face in the office at United Churches. Patty Gohrs is now our Secretary/Administrative Assistant. She comes to us with lots of experience, retiring at the end of the year from West Branch Nephrology where she was their office manager. She is a member of First Baptist Church, Williamsport and some of her favorite things are people, animals and reading. She looks forward to meeting you soon. Her e-mail address will be office@uclc.org.

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet?

The number is 322-5762.

It's available 24 hours a day.

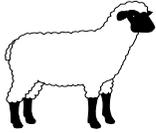


Devotions are three minutes or less, change weekdays and once on the weekend, and are designed to lift your spirits and help you to have "A Closer Walk with God." The devotionalists this winter include:

1/9-15 Rev. Margaret Balliet	1/16-22 Rev. Gwen Bernstine
1/23-29 Rev. Ken Wagner-Pizza	1/30-2/5 Rev. Kathleen Ehrsham
2/6-12 Mrs. Sandy Grier	2/13-19 Mrs. Melanie Taormina

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!

SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*



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

LOOKING FORWARD -“THY WILL BE DONE”

Where there is no vision, the people perish. (Pr. 29:18) It is no secret that most all of us look forward to the first of the year so we can peer into the interior of 2012. We look for signs of promise and benefit that portend a good year. We seek to catch sights to build dreams upon, hints of things to come that we might have “a leg up” on the future. Whether conscious or subconscious, we tend to plan on what *might be*, not on what *will be*.

There certainly is nothing wrong with making a plan. God had a plan from before the creation of the world... a plan that He was capable of and in full control of bringing to success, but unless one is in control of all the elements of his plan and capable of establishing its ways and means, planning is irrelevant. Too often we do it to make us feel in control. In serving God, planning is irrelevant... it is the vision that counts, that is, of course, if the vision is of God.

Shepherd of the Streets has a *vision* and we must shelve the curiosity of what the future will be, and walk by faith in the Source of the vision. We must be visionaries... we must dream dreams, but we do not have the power to make vision *happen* when and where and how we want it to happen. Instead, we must commit our way unto the Lord and let Him unfold, modify, and even change the vision from time to time. There are too many unseen besetting barriers and socio-economic events that delay and defeat our best made plans.

At Shepherd of the Streets, we look forward to this new year. The vision is to build on what has always been the mission... to reach out as an arm of the churches in Lycoming County, assisting people by Christian counseling, giving resources for health, work readiness, and safety, to lift those in our community crushed by economic disparity and social disadvantage to healthier and safer conditions. But, though that has been the vision from the beginning, each year evolves, leading us into new paths, diminishing the intensity of old paths, and introducing us to new ways and means to trod heretofore untried paths.

A vision, in itself, will not produce its fruit. What is envisioned must be, first of all, godly, then faithfully and competently worked in God's grace having a reality that can be sustained by righteousness. It cannot be a plan in the sense of laying out a scheme to gain the resources to achieve it. Getting the resources is honorable only if the *thing* to be achieved is honorable and if it is done in the context of what made it honorable. If the vision is God's, then He is the Source of the resources. They must be re-sourced from Him. The vision, after all, is for His honor and glory, not ours. The truth and righteousness that will design the program, empower the project, and provide the ways and means are

His. We are but the servants that plow and plant, weed and water, harvest to store in His barn.

The Master of the household budgets and builds. It is not ours to draw up ways and schemes to do what we want to happen. In the great salvation plan of God, He desired people to catch the vision and walk in it each day, every day, from the garden of Eden to the second coming of the Christ. In all that, He never once gave over the *way* of accomplishing it to prophets, priests, or kings or any of Adam's race. Only He can do that which reveals Himself. It is the truth of the vision that draws people to God. Thus, we pray that God's will be done, and we share this vision with His church that you may have a part in this grace. Jesus taught that there is no higher ministry than that of serving the lowest in His Name.

Some of the ways you help the poor is by providing hygiene items, bedding and baby needs. We also appreciate the monetary contributions to fund our general budget to keep our lights on and Shepherd Staff paid, and the donations for the discretionary and prescription funds. The list of hygiene items (blankets are currently in great need) 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	

Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monday, January 16

STEP's Community Connect AmeriCorps Program

- 9: Registration for Walk - The Campbell Street Center
- 10: Walk for Service (to Lycoming College Rec. Center)
- 10:30: Registration/Displays/Videos of Dr. King's Speeches
- 11: Program... incl. CAPP / Volunteer Opportunities
- 12: Free Lunch
- 1-1:30: Trivia contest and Raffle

WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHESES*

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 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. (Also... call Gwen at 419-1464 to check for snow cancellation.)



JANUARY:

- 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 of Spiritual Care, Susquehanna Health System *"Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: The Church of the Bible and the Church of the World"*

FEBRUARY:

- 1- **Mr. Charles Getchel**, a member of Pine Street United Methodist Church *"An Old Fashioned Hymn Sing and a New Fashioned Hymn Ring"*
 8 - **Rev. Dr. Rob Manzinger**, Chair, United Churches Social Concerns and Pastor, First Baptist Church, Williamsport, *"Faith Matters"*
 15- **Rev. J. Morris Smith, Th.D.**, Shepherd of the Streets, *"Serving the Poor"*
 22- **Mr. Robert and Rev. Gwen Bernstine**, Presidential Hobbyists, *"Happy Birthday Mr. President (George Washington and Others)"*
 29- To Be Announced

This is a ministry that everyone in our congregations and community is welcome to participate in. Please join us!

CAMPUS MINISTRY *

Sharon Comini, Coordinator,
 Contact at: 419-5376 or ucm@uclc.org

January 2012 is here. It's a time to start over and erase last year's mistakes and start with a clean slate. It's a time for resolutions and promises that we have every intention of keeping. The semester is upon us once again, and I know that the students are thinking the same thing. They make resolutions to get better grades, to work harder, to be successful. We all do that. With all the resolutions we make and try to keep, it seems like it is all about us.

We are so selfish and so proud that we often overlook those around us. Our resolutions become a wish list. Aren't we really saying, "I wish I were successful, I wish I could

lose weight, I wish, I wish, I wish." It's all about us and it shouldn't be. It should be about others as well and what we can do to show God's love to them.

We need to include the Lord in all of our resolutions and turn our wishes into prayers. We need to remember the words found in Philippians 4:13. *"I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me"* It is only through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we can accomplish these resolutions. We need His strength and guidance everyday. I need to remind myself everyday that without Christ, I am nothing, and no matter how hard I try, I can't do it on my own. We need the Lord's help and we need to help each other.

I came across this poem and it is a humbling reminder of our resolutions/wishes.

*I wish you enough
 I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.
 I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.
 I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.
 I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life
 appear much bigger.
 I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.
 I wish you enough loss to appreciate all you possess.
 I wish you enough hellos to get you through
 the final goodbye.*

-Bob Perks

So as you go through your day trying to stick with the resolutions you made, make another resolution to be more like Jesus with everyone you encounter and remember to wish them enough. May God richly bless you in 2012.

30th ANNUAL ECUMENICAL LENTEN SERVICE

7:30 P.M., Sunday, February 19, 2012

Christ United Methodist Church
 148 South Main Street, Hughesville



Speaker: Msgr. Glenn McCreary V.E.
 Pastor, Resurrection Catholic Church, Muncy
 Episcopal Vicar of the Western Pastoral
 Region, Diocese of Scranton

Special Music: Bethel and Christ United
 Methodist Church Combined Choirs

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to witness to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who calls us to renew our faith and unite as people of God, with one another. Join us!

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

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts.” -Mt 2:11 May the Epiphany inspire us to give more of our time, talents, and treasure for those in need. During this month let us particularly focus on children in need in our communities, nation, and the world.

Lycoming County Unemployment Rate Increased in July:

The preliminary rate of unemployment for Lycoming County for October 2011 was 7.0%.

Child Poverty in Lycoming County – Dramatic Increase:

U.S. Census Bureau recently figures for child (under 18) poverty rates from 2007 to 2010 reveal a steady and dramatic increase upward in the most recent figures.

2007	2008	2009	2010
4,481	4,611	4,789	5,765

Although the economic downturn began in 2008, the most significant increase (nearly 1,000) in child poverty in the county occurred in 2010. The most recent figures are above both the national and state level based on percentage of population. Currently one-quarter of those living in poverty in our county are children.

World Hunger Crisis

- Hunger is the world’s #1 health crisis
- Hunger kills more people each year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined
- One in seven people go to bed hungry each night
- One out of four children in developing countries are underweight
- 10.9 million children under five die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60 percent of the deaths;

Congress and Child Poverty Assistance: The Dangers Ahead:

The failure of the “supercommittee” to develop a plan to reduce the federal deficit means that across-the-board cuts will automatically begin in 2013. That means that programs that are essential to provide for the basic needs of children such as nutritional programs such as WIC (Women and Infant Children) and SNAP (food stamps) face cuts just as the needs are increasing locally. Congress must act quickly in 2012 to respond to the call of many faith-based coalitions to place a **Circle of Protection around the Poor**. Other vital cuts include school lunch program and foreign nutritional assistance programs that could affect famine relief.

Epiphany: Ah-ha – This I Can and Will Do: Call or write to our Congressional delegation to tell them that your faith inspires you to tell them to create a **circle of protection around the poor** especially children.

Senators:

Senator Robert Casey, Jr. U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6324	Senator Patrick Toomey U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-4254
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House of Representatives: (Choose ONE)

Rep. Thomas Marino US House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515 (202) 225-3731	Rep. Glenn Thompson US House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515 (202) 225-5121
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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES*

Leadership Conference: The Northumberland Presbytery will hold this free seminar February 18 at Montoursville Presbyterian Church from 9-Noon. It is open to all Clergy and Lay Leaders. A Certificate of Continuing Ed. is available. Call the Presbytery office to register or for details at 570-368-3906. Two Classes are offered:

The Church Unleashed: How To Harness The Power Of Media To Share The Gospel With The Un-Churched Throughout The Susquehanna Valley. This two-session workshop provides practical approaches for utilizing the miracle of modern media to 1) faithfully respond to The Great Commission (Acts 1:8), 2) strengthen your church’s spiritual life, and 3) affordably reach your neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The facilitator for this workshop is Rick Gatham. Rick is a native of Williamsport and a graduate of Penn State University, he is founder and Chairman of USAgency, America’s Advertising Agency Network, and a Ruling Elder on the session of Lewisburg First Presbyterian.

Interwoven: Prayer – Expanding Our Hearts in the Presence of God: “We might describe prayer simply as spending time with God. It could be compared with time spent with a human friend, in order to nurture a relationship... to grow closer... to know another more deeply and intimately.” (Jean Gill) Participants will learn about and practice several prayer forms that seek to nurture and deepen our relationship with God. This workshop will be facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Christine Woods-Henderson.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

- Church Women Untied World Day of Prayer - Friday, March 2 at 1:30 at Church of the Savior Lutheran
- United Churches 2nd Annual Golf Tournament - Thursday, September 27 at White Deer Golf Course

CREATION CORNER

from our Christian Social Concerns Committee

Secular Environmental Groups

To follow up with the theme from last month, planting seeds of hope and action for the integrity of God's creation ("As you sow, so shall you reap," Gal. 6:7), we now look at investing in secular environmental organizations. Earlier columns listed Christian faith-based groups as cited in *The Green Bible* (NRSV, Harper Collins, 2008: www.green-letterbible.com). See "Creation Corner Column" for 12/08, 1/09, 2/09 at www.uclc.org/content/Newsletters.

There are many not-for-profit environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS). Some, like the National Audubon Society and Sierra Club have local affiliates. Some are international in scope, such as the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace. You may have received information about others: Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, EcoTrust, National Wildlife Federation, etc. These are some of the "Big Green" ENGOS (see http://source-watch.org/index.php?title=Big_Green).

Other national/state/regional/local secular efforts exist, and "compete" for your charitable dollar. When deciding to give to a group because of your biblical-based motivation to care for creation, and know what goal you hope to achieve, how do you decide what to support? Some guidance can be gained by seeking answers to such questions as:

- What impact do they have (read an annual statement)?
- Is there a voting membership?
- To whom is the group accountable?
- What are the programs (activism, lobbying education, etc.) and how effective are they?
- What are their ties with corporations, such as funding or representation on their board of directors?
- What are their partnerships with grass-roots environmental efforts?
- How large are the salaries paid to their CEOs (be wary of 7-figure incomes; see <http://noyonews.net/?p=2328>) ?
- Are they officially registered, and is their financial information available, at a state consumer service (in PA, call the PA Dept. of State, 1-800-732-0999) ?
- Has it met standards of the Better Business Wise Giving Alliance, which evaluates national charities based on comprehensive standards for charitable accountability (www.bbb.org/us/Wise-Giving/) ?
- Is it pro-environmental, or merely have a green-sounding name (see <http://www.daily-finance.com/2011/03/08/12-anti-environmental-groups-with-green-names/>) ?
- Is it rated by The Charity Navigator, which has a "Guide to Intelligent Giving" and looks at 225 environmental protection and conservation organizations (www.charitynavigator.org) ?

YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY (YPM)

Rev. Danesta Whaley, Council Director - 326-6868

Keep Pressing Toward the Mark! ... Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching toward things ahead...

Happy 2012! What have you accomplished in 2011 and what are you anticipating in the New Year? You may have done great things this past year, but you can't get too comfortable. You must press ahead to meet the goals the Lord has assigned for you. In this way we will be fulfilling the destiny that HE has designed for each of us.

We are grateful for all of our Yokefellow volunteers who serve in the county, state and federal institutions. Pressing forward toward the mark of sharing the Word of God each week to the men and women incarcerated is a constant and challenging goal. There are times the volunteers themselves are dealing with issues and challenges personally but continue to fulfill the Lord's desire to reach the lost at any cost.

In 2011, Upper Susquehanna Yokefellow served in 9 institutions. There is still a need to expand. Yokefellow is in more than half of the prison institutions in Pennsylvania; however, we continue to press toward the mark to help even more men and women experience the necessary changes in their lives to give back to their communities when they are released. The Lord makes all the difference to them.

Please pray for us to fulfill all the Lord desires us to do. If you are interested in being part of this ministry, please contact our office. We will be glad to fit you into the team. Let's continue to Press toward the mark together making an impact for the Glory of God!

OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

Divers Needed: Everyday there are cancer patients in our community in need of a ride to a medical facility for treatment. You can help save a life by volunteering your time as a driver. To become a volunteer driver for the American Cancer Society you must:

- Own a safe and reliable vehicle
- Have a current, valid drivers license
- Have proof of adequate automobile insurance
- Have a good driving record
- Attend a Road to Recovery volunteer training.

Contact the Am. Cancer Soc. 1-888-227-5445 for information about how to give someone the most precious of all gifts: the chance for a fuller life. Currently there is special need in Jersey Shore and Clinton County.

Children of the World Ministry Youth Center: You are invited to Freedom House's Grand Opening of this after school program and Martin Luther King Program is set for Saturday, June 14 at 4 p.m. at this recently renovated facility at 324 Park Street. Parking is on Vine Avenue. Call 971-7922 or 974-5467 to RSVP.