

UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

Published Monthly by the

United Churches of Lycoming County

202 East Third Street, Williamsport PA 17701

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Rev. Gwen N. Bernstine, Executive Director and Editor

*Issued mid-monthly, September through May. Items marked with an asterix may be of special interest to your congregation.
Deadline to submit articles - First of each month.*

Volume XXVII Number III

March 9, 2010

ECUMENICAL GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES

April 2, 2010

Noon - 3:00 p.m.:

Newberry Ministerium: The Seven Words from the Cross at St. Johns - Newberry United Methodist Church 2101 Newberry Street, Williamsport.

Hepburn Lycoming Ministerium: The Seven Last Words of Christ - at Calvary Church of the Nazarene, 3200 Lycoming Creek Rd, Williamsport.

Noon - 1:30 p.m.:

East End Cluster: The Seven Last Words of Christ - at Redeemer Lutheran Church, 1101 Washington Boulevard, Williamsport.

Noon - 1:00 p.m.:

Montoursville Ministerium: The Passion According to St. Luke - at Bethany Lutheran Church, 369 Broad Street, Montoursville.

Jersey Shore Ministerium: Service at First United Meth. Church, 236 South Main St, Jersey Shore.

7:00 p.m.:

Montoursville Cluster of United Methodist Churches will hold a service at Bethel United Methodist Church, 513 Spruce Street, Montoursville.

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR

Monday, April 19, 2010

Sticking Together Without Getting Stuck is being presented by our Family Life Task Force on April 19 from 7-8:30 p.m. at Messiah Lutheran Church, 324 South Howard Street, South Williamsport.

The guest speakers for the evening are Mary Ann and Jay Paulukonis. They are the parents of two young adult children. For six years they served together as Family Life Directors in Sioux Falls, SD. Currently Mary Ann is Family Life Director in the Scranton Diocese and is president of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministries. Jay is a stained glass artisan with his own studio. They will celebrate 41 years of "their work in progress" this April.

Join us for this fun gathering for married couples as we explore the mystery called marriage -

1 + 1 is more than 2

and 2 are 1

Bad math great grace!

The cost for a couple is \$10. Child care will be available. Register by contacting United Churches, 322-1110 or uclc@sunlink.org.

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

WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCH *

Join us from 12 to 1 p.m. for the Wednesday Noon Ecumenical Lunch Program. Enjoy a tasty \$4 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.

To check about cancellations due to winter storms listen to WRAK or call Gwen at 419-1464.

MARCH:**Lenten Series: People Jesus Met****On His Way To Jerusalem and the Cross**

- 10- *Rev. Judy Stanley*, Interim Pastor, Montoursville Presbyterian Church, **"The Crippled Woman"**
- 17- *Rev. Glenn McCreary*, Pastor, Church of the Resurrection, Muncy, **"Zacchaeus"**
- 24- *Rev. Ann Runnels*, Pastor, Nisbet United Methodist Church, **"The Widow with a Gift"**
- 31- *Rev. Gwen Bernstine*, Executive Director, United Churches, **"The Disciple Who Allowed Satan into His Heart"**

APRIL:

- 7- *Rev. Detlef Huckfelt*, Pastor, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, and *Mr. Todd Fox*, Executive Director, Greater Lycoming Habitat for Humanity, **"Thrivent Builds Habitat"**
- 14- *Rev. Ron Shellhamer*, Interim Pastor, Church of the Savior and St. Matthew Lutheran Churches, **"The Church in Liberia"**
- 21- *Prof. Paul Shuck CFII*, Chief Flight Instructor, AvSport of Lock Haven, **"Touch the Sky! If You Can Drive, You Can Fly!"**
- 28- *Mrs. Kay Huffman*, Vocalist, *Mr. Tom Wetzel*, Pianist, Area Musicians, **"A Musical Salute To Spring"**

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!

POVERTY - A FAITH-BASED RESPONSE*

from our Christian Social Concerns Committee

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . ." (Luke 22:14-15)

These words begin the Gospel that many of us will read on Palm Sunday. With whom are we willing to share what resources and talents we have and the very food we eat?

Are we also ready to advocate for justice – getting outside our comfort zone – to call for changes in government policies and societal practices to empower those who are hungry and living in poverty?

Local Unemployment Rate: Lycoming County's unemployment rate for December 2009 was 9.7%. This rate was higher than a few months earlier and 2.2% higher than a year earlier.

Hunger and Poverty Basics

- 13% of people in the United States live in poverty.
- More than 14% of households are hungry or at risk of hunger.
- Nearly one in four children—16.7 million—live in households that struggle to put food on the table.
- More than 14 million children (age 18 and younger) live in poverty.
- More than half of all Americans (51%) will live in poverty at some point before age 65.
- In 2008, the poverty threshold for a family of four (two adults, two children) was \$21,834

Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Are Not Enough: In a low-income budget, food is often the most flexible item. Rent, transportation, child care and utilities are fixed expenses. Food is a place struggling family cut corners.

One component needed to achieve this goal is strong child nutrition programs, like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the school meal programs. But progress against hunger requires broader efforts to reduce poverty. **Food assistance to hungry people is vital, but it is not enough. Tax policies – yes, taxes! – can play a role in alleviating poverty.** Jesus knew that sharing the Passover meal would not be enough.

Tax Policy Changes and Poverty Relief: The poverty that causes hunger is largely due to a lack of monetary resources. Tax policies for the nation will be revised in 2010. These tax changes could put more money in the pockets of low-income families, making it easier for them to make ends meet. Renewing and raising the level of the **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** allowance is a significant way to assist families living in poverty.

What We Can Do – Bread for the World's Offering of Letters 2010: To protect and strengthen tax policies for working families through renewal and expansion of the EITC visit www.offeringofletters.org or contact Dan Doyle (546-2385). Participation in the offering of Letters has been a primary commitment of the **United Churches of Lycoming County's Christian Social Concerns Committee** and area churches.

SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

Dr. J. Morris Smith

Contact at: 322-6538

LENT AND THE POOR

Two themes dominate the season of Lent. Jesus in the desert tempted by the devil for forty days and the teaching of Jesus in the sermon on the mount concerning the three acts of righteousness: almsgiving, fasting, and prayer. From the first, Lent is a time of entering the desert with Jesus to encounter sin that continues to stumble us with its root of

bitterness and cut it from our lives by the power of the word as Jesus exemplified in quoting scripture in each of the temptations. From the second, we find ways of shaping the desert within, the means of blowing the sand (dust) of our lives away to expose what lies hidden beneath by subjecting our own spirit to the Spirit (Wind) of God through almsgiving, fasting, and prayer.

It is a season to identify more poverty to promote holy poverty within. The first beatitude calls for poverty of spirit. There are two words in the Greek translated "poor": *penichros*, meaning to have little, and *ptochos*, which means to have nothing...to be conspicuously poor. It is this second word that Jesus used when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To have nothing in spirit is akin to self-denial, abandonment to holiness.

Alms is the translation of *eleemosune* connected with *eleemon* (merciful) and means almsgiving or deeds of mercy. Jesus introduces almsgiving in the sermon on the mount with the word, *dikaosune*, which means an act of "justice" or "righteousness", thus almsgiving is called by Jesus an act of righteousness. St. Paul said that we are the "righteousness of God."

We should always be conscientious about giving to the poor ("blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy"), but entering into Lent forces us to focus, and sometimes refocus, on the poor by identifying with the poor. Most of us will never be poor, we can only identify with the poor. It is in the loneliness of the desert that we give over everything to God and truly become poor. Poverty is basic to our Lenten journey. To give alms in secret, as Jesus suggests, strips the self of pride, ostentation, and self-justification. In none of self, we can be all in Him.

Fasting identifies with the poor who go hungry for lack of proper sustenance. We live in a country replete with food and in order to know hunger, we must force ourselves to it. Fasting is translated from *nesteuo* and literally means "not to eat" and is used of voluntary fasting. Jesus taught that the motive for fasting is purity and simplicity. Most of us want for nothing. It is good to force ourselves know what it

is to "want", especially when it connects with our appetitive nature. Fasting helps to strip us of self-righteousness and religious pride.

Prayer identifies with the poor who must ask in order to get. Our usual method is to obtain out of our own means, to act out of our own strengths, and to gain confidence out of our abilities. Observing Lent forces us to poverty of body, soul, mind, and strength, opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit who can supply our need and is our advocate, comforter, and guide. Abandonment to holiness is basic to the teachings of Christ and basic to being in Christ.

Holy is from *hagios* which means to "separate or set aside." Have a holy journey during Lent.

We thank all of those who collect hygiene items, bedding, and baby needs for us. We appreciate the monetary contributions to fund our general budget to keep our ministry open, and the donations for discretionary and prescription funds. The list of hygiene items we use follows, and are regular sizes of:

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

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 fall include:

3/8-14 Rev. Gwen Bernstine 3/15-21 Rev. Georgianna Welch
3/22-28 Mrs. Sandy Grier 3/29-4/4 Ms. Nan Porter
4/5-11 Revs. Jim & Kathy Behrens 4/12-18 Rev. Jeff Zetto

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!

It's a great way to have a closer walk with God.

FOOD PANTRY **Gail Burkhart, Coordinator**Contact at: 322-1657*

Our United Churches/Center City Food Pantry provides a three day supply of food to those in need. This February we helped 68 families, including 111 adults, 51 children and 31 elderly for a total of 193 persons.

February is a difficult time for the persons we serve. The bills such as heat, electricity, etc. are starting to pile up and there is no money in their household to cover those bills once they have gotten to triple digits. There are few, if any agencies that have enough funds to help all those in need, so families operate in the 'cover the shut-off notice' mode.

This leads to situations where there is no gas money to get to the pantry to pick up food (even though the need is great). Then Old Man Winter gets into the act with just enough snow and ice that people can't use their carts or wagons or 'foot-power' to come here.

All that said, difficulties multiply for the folks that need our help. So the small numbers that you see in our monthly stats don't give an accurate picture of the need. During the first week of March we were busy with all the rescheduled appointments from February, as well as the March appointments. It's definitely an unpleasant cycle that we work hard to break but sometimes wonder if that will ever happen.

We also want to share with you some sad news. One of the volunteers that usually worked on Monday, the day a lot of you bring in donations, passed away rather suddenly last week. She was diagnosed with cancer a month ago. As well as sorting food and taking donation information, Judy did a lot of the necessary clerical work. She was a wonder-worker and we were blessed to have her with our team. Our prayers go out to her family.

Things that we are very low on at the pantry:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Oodles of Noodles</i> | <i>Tea Bags</i> |
| <i>Sugar</i> | <i>Elbow Macaroni</i> |
| <i>Hamburger Helper</i> | <i>Tuna Helper</i> |
| <i>Canned Fruit</i> | <i>Granola Bars</i> |
| <i>Cereal</i> | <i>Cake Mixes & Frosting</i> |
| <i>Jello</i> | <i>Chunky Soups</i> |

Thank you for your help and have a blessed month.

United Churches
is your Church
e - x - t - e - n - d - e - d
in ministry

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

Students are half way through their semester and are preparing for midterm exams. For Lent, we have been traveling to different churches to worship with them on Wednesday evenings. We have, so far, worshiped with Trinity Episcopal Church on Ash Wednesday, and joined in evening prayer at St. Mark's and St. Michael's Lutheran Churches. It's a nice change of pace for the students to visit local churches. They seem to be enjoying it.

Penn College will be holding an Open House on Saturday March 27 in the Bush Campus Center. If you have a child that is thinking about attending Penn College, you may want to come by campus that day. When you are there, make sure you stop by our UCM table.

Our lasagna fund raiser dinner has been rescheduled for April 7 at St. Paul Calvary Church. We are hopeful that we won't be snowed out this time.

Since the students are studying for midterms, that means that they are half way done with the semester and it is time to start thinking about study bags for them for their finals. We were able to give away 100 study bags with only two churches participating. Just think about how many students we could reach if more churches got involved.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES *

String Trios and Story Time is a family concert to benefit Erin's Dream to be held Sunday, March 28th at 3 p.m. at Covenant Central Presbyterian Church, 807 W Fourth St., Williamsport. Tickets are available at the door and online at www.erinsdream.org or by contacting Rachel Lever: 570-506-9936. The cost is \$7 for adults, \$5 for children/sudents, free for children 2 and under. Performing will be: Rachel Lever, violin; Elizabeth Kuefler, viola; Andrew Rammon, cello; Bernadette Boerckel, narrator *About Erin's Dream*: After losing two children to infant leukemia, Erin had a dream to launch an organization to help families who face battles with chronically or terminally ill children.

Lasagna Dinner for our Campus Ministry has been rescheduled to **Wednesday - April 7, 2010** from 5:00-7:00 P.M. at St. Paul Calvary United Methodist Church, 1427 Memorial Avenue, Williamsport. The menu includes meat or meatless lasagna, salad, bread and dessert. Suggested donation - \$7/adults, \$3/children under 12. Dine in and enjoy the musical entertainment or take outs are available.

CREATION CORNER*from our Christian Social Concerns Committee***R**ESOURCES FOR SPRING 2010

www.earthhour.org Vote Earth. Switch off your lights, Saturday March 27, 8:30-9:30 p.m.

<http://nacd.org/stewardship/2010> re: the 55th anniversary

of the 2010 Stewardship Week sponsored by the National Association for Conservation Districts, the theme of which is "Conservation Habits=Healthy Habitats". Natural resource conservation is the emphasis, with habitat education materials useful for Sunday Schools, youth groups, vacation bible schools, summer camps, etc. (booklets, posters, bookmarks, placemat/activity sheet, etc. Materials are age appropriate. Also, a Habitat educators guide, suggestions for community outreach, and most important for readers of this column, the "Habitat Stewardship Church Leaders Guide" and "Habitat Stewardship PowerPoint presentation." For the litany and program insert (or blank), visit http://www.ffa.org/documents/nacd_habitatlitany.pdf All emphasize the importance of habitats and are also appropriate for annual meetings, service organizations, etc. Order via nacdstore.org or at 1-888-695-2433. In Lycoming County, contact Cathy Entz, watershed specialist, phone 433-3003, or e-mail centz@lcyo.org

www.eday40.org re: the 40th anniversary of Earth Day.

www.preserveourplanet.com/books re: the National Geographic *Green Families Guide: The Complete Reference for Eco-friendly Parents*.

www.GreatGreenCareers.com re: setting up a free job-seekers account.

www.Earth911.com re: Recycling magazines.

www.wseff.org re: hosting an inspiring "wild and scenic" environmental film festival, on tour, in your community. It's easy and affordable.

UPCOMING DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

May 1 - Blanket and Kit Collection - 9-Noon

May 6 - National Day of Prayer Service at Bowman Field - 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

May 7 - May Friendship Day Luncheon and Service of Church Women United - Noon at Pine Street United Methodist Church

May 30 - United Churches Sunday

CLASSIFIEDS

Nurses Needed: St. Anthony's Free Medical Clinic is in need of volunteer RNs and Secretaries for:

Mondays from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

First Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Workers are scheduled on a rotational basis and usually serve only once per month. If you are interested please call Karen Kirk at 337-7580 or Deb Steinbacher at 433-3757.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES *

Faith Community / Parish Nurse Training will be presented in 7 sessions beginning April 17. They are offered by Diakon Family Life Services and are open to all Denominations. Held at the Upper Susquehanna Synod office, Lewisburg, sessions are 4/17, 5/8, 6/5, 9/18, 10/9, 11/6, and 12/4, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Course Cost is \$350 with \$200 due at registration.

The course curriculum has been approved for 49.6 contact hours. Contact Debbie at (570) 320-0520 or bestd@diakon.org for details or to register.

Economic and Investment Outlook Update and the Economy's Impact on Congregations - This event can help Pastors and Church Leaders gain a better understanding of the factors that affect financial markets and trends. You can then apply what you learn to help make more informed investment decisions - decisions that can help you reach your charitable goals.

We will discuss the economy's impact on congregations and ministries and creative ideas found in many different congregations.

This event will be presented by Charles D. Etzweiler, MBA, CFP®, Thrivent Asset Management Product Consulting Group, from Minneapolis MN. There is no cost for you to attend. The event will be held twice, both on Tuesday, May 11 at New Covenant United Church of Christ, 202 East Third Street, Williamsport. The daytime meeting will be from Noon - 2 including a light lunch and the evening meeting will be from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. To register contact United Churches, 322-1110 or uclc@sunlink.net.

CE Summer Unit 2010: An 11 week Clinical Pastoral Education Program will be held at Geisinger Medical Center School of Spiritual Care in Danville from June 1 - August 12. The unity is entitled "Essentials of Spiritual Care: The Process of Becoming an Effective Chaplain. Tuition is \$500. To apply, complete the application at www.acpe.edu and mail with \$20 non-refundable application fee to Geisinger Medical Center Spiritual Care Dept. 100 N. Academy Ave, Danville PA 17822-2801, Attn: Tina Kester Adm. Ast.

RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY *

Study Bags are needed as an outreach to students at Penn College as they prepare for final exams this spring. Paper bags filled with chips, cookies, popcorn, mints, gum, water bottles, juice boxes, breakfast bars, oatmeal packets, ... just about anything ... and encouraging notes help them know that others care. If your church is interested in participating, contact Sharon Comini at 419-5376.

Gamblers Anonymous - The Muncy chapter which recently began is no longer meeting. The leader is moving from the area. Several participants are now looking for a group in the area. If you have any information please contact United Churches, 322-1110.

Eyeglass Recycling: As we go into spring and think about cleaning our houses and looking through our various catch all drawers, one may come across old unused eyeglasses. If this would happen to you, and you do not know what to do with them, please consider dropping them into the Lycoming creek Lions Eyeglass Recycling Mail Box located at Winner Hardware Bass Pro on Dewey Avenue, and leave the rest to the Lions.

FREE Quit Tobacco Class for smokers and smokeless tobacco users + \$100 FREE quit aides are also available. Call Donna Sorgen, Tobacco Prevention Specialist, to register (570)323-8543 ext 118. These classes will be in two locations....

- Jersey Shore Hospital Board Room (near Cafeteria), 1020 Thompson St., Jersey Shore, on Mondays starting March 22, through April 26, 6:30pm-7:30pm ...or...
- West Branch Drug and Alcohol 3rd Floor, 213 West 4th Street, Williamsport on Tuesday afternoons, starting April 13 through May 18 from 3 - 4 p.m.

YOKEFELLOW

Evadna Cline, Director, Yokefellow Center - 326-6868

As Jesus and his disciples were coming closer to Jerusalem, they stopped at Bethpage at the hill called the Mount of Olives. From there Jesus sent two of his followers and said to them, "Go to the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will quickly find a donkey tied there with its colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks you why you are taking the donkeys, say that the Master needs them, and he will send them at once." Mt. 21: 1-3

Max Lucado in his book *The Greatest Moments* states that when he enters Heaven he has an agenda that he wants to know. He expects to tell those with him to go ahead and swap stories with the disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, or Paul, but the person Max will be seeking out will be the owner of the donkey which was used to carry Jesus into Je-

rusalem. Some of the questions Max hopes to have answered are, "How did you know it was Jesus who needed the donkey? Did you get a telegram? Did an angel appear in your bowl of lentils?" Max also wants to know if it was hard to give up his donkey; would he have had plans to use the animal to take produce to market that day, or would the children have planned to play with the colt.

Of even more importance is the question, did the owner know that God would be borrowing and using his donkey on that day? And, did the owner ever have any thoughts that the sharing of his donkey and colt would be remembered more than 2,000 years after that infamous day?

Do you wonder as I do at this season what He is calling me to give; Do you have a donkey that Jesus could ride to move his story further down the road. Can you sing Hosanna in the Highest, can you program a computer for a senior who is learning to use the internet or other programs for the first time, or have you learned to speak Spanish or French or can you write a check to support a ministry?

When we get to heaven will you be looking for persons who heard the Gospel and responded while in jail or prison because of your support of Yokefellow Prison Ministry or other programs. Will you be met at the gates by a person who you helped find their way to your church and felt comfortable in worship or a Bible Study group because of your mentoring.

Elton Trueblood, the founder of Yokefellow Prison Ministry warned us many years ago that those deeds we may not consider to be important are very important in God's economy. The donkey owner is just one in a long line of folks who gave what they may have thought to be little things but in the hands of our big God made quite a difference.

Please mark your calendar for Tuesday, April 13 for the Annual Yokefellow Prison Ministry Awareness Banquet which is scheduled to be held in Trinity Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 844 W. Fourth St., Williamsport. The women of Trinity will serve a lasagna meal with all the trimmings. The speaker for the evening will be Bishop Nathan Baxter, the 10th bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. He was elected as bishop coadjutor on July 22, 2006 and consecrated on October 22, 2006. Bishop Baxter was selected to deliver the prayer for the nation at the White House Millennium Celebration, which was televised internationally. He was acknowledged by Mrs. Nancy Regan for his leadership in planning the Funeral of President Ronald Regan. Please call the Yokefellow Prison Ministry Office at 326-6868 to reserve your opportunity to hear this renounced speaker. This is a free meal sponsored by Yokefellow Prison Ministry but a free will offering will be received that evening which will be used toward the local prison ministry.