



UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

Published Monthly by the
UNITED CHURCHES OF LYCOMING COUNTY
202 East Third Street, Williamsport PA 17701
Phone: 570-322-1110, E-Mail: director@uclc.org
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Issued mid-monthly, September through May. Items marked with an asterisk may be of special interest to your congregation. Deadline to submit articles - First of each month.

VOLUME XXIX NUMBER 3

March 13, 2012

Return Service Requested

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

FLOOD RECOVERY *

People are so generous! When you see the yellow and burgundy banner that's God's people working together to restore basic resources to folks continuing to recover from the flooding of last year.

It's been six months since the flood, and disasters appear all around us, yet no one has forgotten the needs we still have in our community. This past week a work team was here from the Scranton area (see picture at right), completing three projects, and others are scheduling spring and summer trips.

Gathering weekly, sharing the work load ... embracing both successes and problems, you'll find denominational liaisons, our caseworkers, site coordinator, ministries like Saving Hope, Diakon, ARW and ARC as well as government workers from the county, state and federal levels. Everyone working together to meet basic unmet needs! Matching workers to the work needing to be done.



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

- Refer flood victims with basic unmet needs to the committee.
- Volunteer to house volunteer work groups in your church.
- Volunteer to provide meals for volunteer work groups.

We must work together as a community to help individuals affected by the Tropical Storm Lee disaster if we are to get the job done. Areas of focus include: clean-up, building and repair, long term personal needs - spiritual counseling and support - furniture, relocation into permanent housing. The number at which we can be reached is **570-322-7648**.

I hope many of you will also be able to be part of the "Help to Restore Beauty to the Sock" cleanup in Lycoming County on Saturday, March 24th beginning at 9:30 a.m. Information and registration is needed by 3/20 by contacting clintoncountycleanscapes@yahoo.com or 570-726-3511.

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

WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHES*

Join us from 12 to 1 p.m. and you are always assured of a tasty \$6 lunch, warm, ecumenical fellowship and a thoughtful program designed to enrich your life mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. The parking is free in the Pine Street lot north of the church from 11 to 1:30. No reservations are necessary, but a call to Gwen, Office-322-1110 if you are not a regular attender will help the caterer know how much food to prepare. (Call Gwen at Cell-419-1464 to check for weather cancellation.)

**MARCH:**

- 14- **Rev. Dr. Pamela Ford**, Pastor, Pine St. United Methodist Church, "*Understanding Your Grandchildren*"
- 21- **Mr. Eugene Breisch, Ms. Marciline Brown, and Mr. Scott Williams**, Project Impact and Bridge Haven, "*Helping Families of Inmates*"
- 28- **Ms. Wendy McCormick**, Harpist, **Ms. Lucy Henry**, Flutist, "*Celtic and Old Time Favorites*"

APRIL:

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

**GOOD FRIDAY
ECUMENICAL SERVICES***

12 Noon - 1:30p.m.:

- Redeemer Lutheran Church, 1101 Washington Blvd, Wmspt., by the North East Cluster of Churches

12 Noon - 3:00 p.m.

- St. Marks Lutheran Church, 142 Market St., Wmspt., by the Williamsport City Ministerium
- St. John's Newberry United Methodist Church, 2101 Newberry Street, Wmspt, by the Newberry Ministerium

- Christ United Methodist Church, 148 South Main St., Hughesville, by the East Lycoming Ministerium



United Churches
2nd Annual Golf Tournament*
Thursday, September 27, 2012

at White Deer Golf Course

8:15 a.m. registration and refreshments

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

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

Currently we are signing up golfers (both individuals and foursomes). We are also enlisting sponsors.

Tournament Sponsorship:	\$500
Meal Sponsorship:	\$250
Prize Sponsorship:	\$200
Hole Sponsorship (Signs):	\$100
Church Sponsorship:	\$ 50

We also need organizations willing to give us prizes for our golfers. Anyone with the right connections, or who has a business, should contact us if they can help.

Our Golf Tournament last year was a resounding success, *thanks to each of you!* We had 108 golfers (the largest tournament of the year at White Deer up until that time) and raised over \$8,000 for all of United Churches Ministries. Without your participation and your help we could not have done it. With you on board our second tournament will be bigger, better and more successful.

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

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet?

The number is 322-5762.

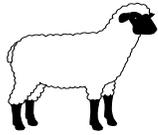
It's available 24 hours a day.



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:

3/12-18 Rev. Gwen Bernstine	3/19-25 Fr. Dan Kovalak
3/26-4/1 Rev. Robert Lauver	4/2-8 Rev. Gwen Bernstine
4/9-15 Pastors Jim & Kathy Behrens	4/15-22 Rev. Danesta Whaley

Listen today and tell others about this ministry!



SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

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

“THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO”

Attitudes toward the poor can be as diverse as the human population. Those in poverty and who stay in poverty can be understood only when we are not willing to understand why they are. Physical, mental, social, and spiritual disabilities explain much. Generational and cultural heritage explain many. Criminal activity, past or present, account for some. Lack of knowledge and ignorance of basic human skills, producing illiteracy, mathematical ineptness, and the inability to produce stimulating ideas and forethought, account for most. Of course, all of these states are interrelated.

Attitudinizing comes from those who are not, and most likely have never been, in any of these conditions. For instance, if I have a washing machine, my attitude toward those who do not and therefore cannot keep their clothes clean, is easily rejecting. If I do not like the smell, I could help them with whatever it takes to clean their clothes. If people do not have a job, are they are just lazy or is something missing that I might help them achieve so they could get a job. Do I score the poor off as forever a drag on society, or do I seek ways to provide what is missing? This is not promoting entitlement... this is caring about people. This is not welfare, but concern for the welfare of someone.

Most of the time people need to be shown, to be encouraged, to see themselves as important enough for someone to care. Many of us remember someone(s) who did just that...a teacher, pastor, perhaps even a stranger.

Who, what, where were the disciples before Jesus tapped them to be His apostolic diplomats? These paupers became princes of the Church, serving a King who cared. St. Paul, the only educated one, had to become poor and rejected before he was ready to be the world’s greatest missionary. Would I have even looked twice at any of them? Would I have listened to what they had to say before making my judgment on what they had to wear? For that matter, I wonder if I would have had any interest at all in John the Baptist, who wore camel’s hair (I wonder what that smelled like?) and ate locusts and wild honey.

We will soon celebrate the triumphant death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. I often put myself at the foot of the cross... “were you there when they crucified my Lord?” Where would I have been? Would I have been among those who railed at Him because He did not measure up to the status quo? Would I have been one of the Roman soldiers who was only following orders and watched unaffected as all this was taking place? Would I have been among the temple leadership, who had already made up their minds about Him? Who would I have been?

For all who judged Jesus by appearance, His simple prayer is for them, “Father, forgive them, they know not

what they do.” Their judgment had clouded reality. They have been quick to judge and quick to speak because their attitudes were set as rigid as cement. They were stiff-necked in heart and mind, with foreheads of brass. They were dead while living, all because of their attitude.

Your attitude toward the poor forms your attitude toward Jesus, for there He is. There was in Him no stately bearing to make us look at Him, nor appearance that would attract us to Him. He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held Him in no esteem...while we thought of Him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:2b-3. 4b)

Some of the ways you can work on your attitudes is to reach out to the poor by providing hygiene items, bedding and baby needs. Our Shepherd Ministry 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 are:

Regular sizes please...

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

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

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

The birds are chirping, the geese are flying and the crocus is popping up to the sun, so it must be Spring. And we're having a grand Spring at our new location at The Center. Everyday we 'tweak' something! We now have a bulletin board hung, tables moved and a wonderful gentleman built us a coat tree! It feels like home. Clients love the parking, no steps, and everyone has 'found' us.

To our congregations, agencies and individual donors we appreciate your patience and are happy to see that you have now found our location with ease. If you haven't been here, we encourage you to stop in, we love to show it off!

Before we get too far away from thanking the folks who made all this possible, we want to especially acknowledge our friends at the American Rescue Workers. Over the years we've developed a wonderfully symbiotic relationship that makes me think of the way Jesus meant us all to be there for one another. The day we were moving, the only trucks available were ones with ramps up into the box of the truck, the prospect of having to push all our freezers, etc. up that ramp was awful. Again our friends stepped up with a large truck, hydraulic tailgate and driver to save the day. What promised to be a long, miserable, possibly dangerous day turned into a smooth, manageable project. We miss being so physically close to you ARW, but you are always in our thoughts with thanks and prayers for the successful day to day operations of our mutual missions to care for God's people.

We have some specific needs this month including:

<i>Pasta (Spaghetti Noodles and Egg Noodles particularly)</i>	<i>Hamburger Helpers [any flavor]</i>
<i>Jelly</i>	<i>Tea Bags [regular flavor]</i>
<i>Coffee</i>	<i>Chicken Noodle Soup</i>
<i>Chunky Soups</i>	<i>Microwave Popcorn</i>
<i>Sweet Peas</i>	<i>Pop Tarts</i>
<i>Spaghetti Sauce</i>	<i>Stuffing</i>
<i>Saltine Crackers</i>	
<i>Oatmeal Packets [flavored]</i>	



Thanks for all you do for us! Your donations make it possible for us to assist the extra folks now coming to the pantry and to give our regular clients a fair supply of food to help them in their need. Hours continue to be 9:30-Noon on Mondays for delivery and Tuesdays/Thursdays from 10-3 for clients (appointments are needed). We are in The Center, 600 Campbell St, corner of Campbell and Memorial.

As always you are in our prayers and we ask that you seek God's will for us that this may be our long term home from which to serve as many of His children as come to our door. On a personal note, to those of you who have offered prayer for my recovery from recent heart issues, you have no idea how much that means to me. You are all special and I feel close to each of you. Thank you so very much.

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

Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. (Psalm 82:3-4) Justice, also described as fairness, is best understood from a balanced perspective. To promote a spirit of fairness in their children one family has one child cut the pie and then that same child is last to select a piece. What if we took that view regarding our personal and our government's response to the needs of those experiencing poverty? Justice requires us to seek changes to economic and political systems that are unbalanced.

Lenten Action: Write a Letter ...and turn three minutes of your time into lasting change for hungry people – out of faith rises advocacy for justice.

A handwritten letter to Congress is an effective expression of faith. Adding why you are motivated to write to the sample letter below influences Congressional action.

Provide your name and address on **both** the letter and envelope so that your members of Congress know you are one of the people they represent.

Stand up for hungry and poor people in the United States by protecting funding for domestic nutrition programs that alleviate hunger and help lift Americans out of poverty. While we must work to reduce our deficit, our choices must not hurt those whom Jesus called the least among us.

Domestic nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Pgm. (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Pgm. for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), are effective in fighting hunger. While poverty and unemployment increased in the last three years, these programs have kept the number of families struggling to put food on the table from going up any higher.

Cuts to programs such as SNAP and WIC will put millions of American families at risk of hunger. More than 44 million Americans currently participate in SNAP and nearly 9 million women and young children participate in WIC. Cutting these programs won't significantly reduce the budget deficit but could increase costs in the long run. Hunger already costs our country an estimated \$167 billion annually in lost productivity, reduced educational outcomes, and increased healthcare costs. I urge you to form a circle of protection around funding for domestic nutrition programs that help meet the nutritional needs of millions of Americans.

Send Letters to:

Senaator Robert Casey and/or Senator Patrick Toomey US Senate Washington DC 20510	Representative Tom Marino or Representative Glenn Thompson US House of Representatives Washington DC 20515
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CAMPUS MINISTRY *

Sharon Comini, Coordinator,

Contact at: 447-3491 or ucm@uclc.org

The students at Penn College are enjoying a well deserved break from their studies. Unfortunately, due to other commitments that the students had made, we were unable to go on a mission trip this year. We will continue to work on funding and look forward to making an impact next spring.

For our February community service project we were the clean-up crew for the First Technology Competition held for high school students at the college. As always, we are willing to help your congregation with upcoming projects. Please let us know how we can serve.



*Thank
You!*



The students and I would like to thank everyone who has made soup for our sale and everyone who has purchased soup! Every quart of homemade soup has been donated. When you purchase a quart of soup the entire \$5 purchase price goes toward funding our program. Your support of our ministry to Pennsylvania College of Technology students is vital to our continued success.

We still have some soup available if you missed out on the sale or need a refill.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Beef Noodle Soup | Cheeseburger Soup |
| Chicken Noodle Soup | Chicken Vegetable Soup |
| Italian Vegetable Soup | Italian Wedding Soup |

We could not do what we do without you! May God richly bless you for partnering with us.

WORSHIP SERVICES

There are still some opportunities for pastors and worship leaders to help provide worship services in area nursing homes and our County Prison during 2012.

Sunday Afternoons:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Manor Care North | Manor Care South |
| Williamsport Home | Valley View |
| Pre Release/Men | The Meadows |
| The Hillside | |

Thursdays: Mornings - Presbyterian Home
Afternoon - Rose View Center

To volunteer, or for details call United Churches office at 570-322-1110 or e-mail Gwen at director@uclc.org.

CREATION CORNER

from our Christian Social Concerns Committee

2012 Stewardship Week

"Soil to Spoon: Connecting Food Back to Soil"

Soil to Spoon, the theme for the 57th Soil and Water Stewardship Week, Sunday April 29 – Sunday May 6, 2012, sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), heralds the ethic of personal and social responsibility to be good stewards of land, water and natural resources. Thus stewardship "is essentially a synonym for conservation," so as to leave a "rich legacy for future generations."

Especially helpful materials from the NACD, besides the Educators Guide, is the "Church Leaders Guide." Over fifty biblical passages are woven through the Guide to lift up the narrative concept of being in HARMONY with God and His creation. The letters in HARMONY are used as an acronym (Humble yourself; Act; Reconcile; Mercy extended; Own your tongue; Never hold a grudge; Yield to others). A homily on world hunger, a farmer's point-of-view, hymn suggestions and a litany are also proposed.

The NACD "Soil to Spoon" education materials for children would be good for those in an urban context---those who are most separated from "the land." Four levels of objectives, vocabulary, activities, worksheets and standards are appropriately informative for grades K-6 and up. Churches from farming communities will also benefit from the materials in their VBS or Sunday School curriculum, and secular classrooms will also appreciate the recommended book list devoted to raising our agricultural literacy.

Other resources include Soil to Spoon bookmarks, posters, clip art, placemat /activity sheets, PSAs, bulletin inserts, etc. Future upcoming yearly themes are Water/Watersheds (2013), Soil (2014), Wildlife/Habitat (2015) and Forestry (2016).

Because the origin of Stewardship Week preceded the founding of Earth Day, and because it follows the annual April 22 observance of Earth Day, and also occurs at the same time as National Arbor Day (the last Saturday of April), people of faith have many opportunities at this time of year to emphasize their caring for creation.

Contacts: web: www.nacdnet.org/stewardship/2012

NACD marketplace: www.nacdstore.org

E-mail: stewardship@nacdn.net

Phone 202.547.6223

Or contact a conservation district offices near you.

The mission of the NACD is "conserving natural resources for our future." It is one of the rare secular organizations that has outreach materials for churches.

Church Women United....**MAY FRIENDSHIP DAY LUNCHEON & PROGRAM**

Friday, May 4 beginning at Noon
 First Church of Christ Disciples
 1250 Almond Street, Williamsport

Mark the date and watch for more information.

YOKEFELLOW PRISON MINISTRY (YPM)

Rev. Danesta Whaley, Council Director - 326-6868

LABORS OF LOVE

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward HIS name, in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.
 Hebrews 6:10

Blessings to all of you! Yokefellow is grateful for your labors of love that you have shown by supporting the work of the ministry. Our Rose Fundraiser held on February 13 was a success because of you! There were 219 dozen roses sold and we had a profit of over \$1700. Thank you to all who helped us and to those who purchased the beautiful roses from Nevills.

Recently we held another volunteer training for those who were interested in the work of the ministry by going into the prisons and networking with us in other ways. There is a great need at Muncy Prison for Yokefellow volunteers to help facilitate small groups. The numbers have been increasing with approximately 60 women attending the weekly small groups held on Thursday evenings at Muncy. We have 3 volunteers who regularly go into the prison at Muncy but are looking for more. If you are interested, please contact our office and we will set up an appointment to discuss any questions you may have.

It is exciting each week to see what the Lord is doing in each of the prisons that we go into. The volunteers always have much to share of their 'journeys' into the prison. In the next newsletter, one of our Muncy volunteers will be sharing his experience while devoting his time as a volunteer for more than 25 years. We are grateful for your labors of love.

CLASSIFIEDS

AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT NEEDS A NEW HOME: The PA Department of Health has....

- two overhead projectors that fold up and have a carrying case
- several large but portable TV/VCR units that are in travel cases (TV screens are 13" x 13")
- several slide projectors

They would like to donate these to whoever can use them. All are in working condition. Contact Janet Hessert, Northcentral District Office, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Williamsport at 570-327-3400 or jhessert@pa.gov.

CANDELABRA NEED A NEW HOME: New Covenant United Church of Christ has several sets of candelabra needing a new home. Most mount on pews, but several are free standing, and hold different numbers of candles.

Pew Mount Candelabra

holding 1 candle - brass plated tubular (14 available)
 solid brass (14 available)

holding 3 candles - brass plated tubular (2 available)

Free Standing Candelabra

Holding 15 candles - brass plated tubular
 spiraling construction

These are free to a good home. Contact the New Covenant office at 570-326-3308 or ncucc@comcast.net.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRIES

ST. ANTHONY'S MEDICAL CLINIC needs nurses and secretaries primarily for Wednesdays from 10:30 am until approximately 1:00 pm. Volunteers usually come once or twice a month, or as often as they wish. They appreciate any help! If Wednesdays won't work, volunteers are also needed on Monday evenings from 6:30 pm until approximately 9:30 pm. Again, volunteers can work as often as they wish. Interested persons should call Deb Steinbacher, 570- 433-3757.

CALLING ALL CLERGY AND PASTORAL CARE-GIVERS.... Area clergy, chaplains, and other pastoral caregivers are invited to breakfast in Susquehanna Health's new Susquehanna Tower on Thursday, April 19 from 8 to 10 AM. The morning's program includes food for body, mind and spirit. Besides breakfast, participants will



receive important information about our new patient tower and enjoy remarks from health system CEO Steve Johnson. Other high-

lights include worship in the new chapel, gifts and tours.

Parking for this event is located on High St. Enter the main lobby and proceed to the third floor Conference and Education Center. Doors open at 7:30 AM with breakfast served promptly at 8 AM. For additional information and answers to questions please contact Susquehanna Health's Pastoral Care Department at 570-321-2215 or email me directly at jcharnock@susquehannahealth.org <<mailto:jcharnock@susquehannahealth.org>> .

Looking forward to seeing you on April 19,

John Charnock, Pastoral Care Director
 Susquehanna Health

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES *

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

THE WILLIAMSPORT CIVIC CHORUS will present Beethoven's Mass in C and Haydn's Mass in the Time of War on Sunday, April 29 at 3 PM in the Nave of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Williamsport. This concert will be with full orchestra, Dr. Kenneth Sarch, concert master. Soloists will be Faith Dunkleberger, soprano; Sarah Decker, soprano; Amanda Silliker, mezzo soprano; Michael Connor, tenor; Todd Griffiths, bass. Tickets are available at RM Sides Family Music Center, Otto Bookstore, from any chorus member, and at the door on the day of the concert. Adults \$10 presale/\$12 at door, Students \$8 presale, \$10 at door, children under 12 free with a paid adult. For more information on the Chorus go to www.williamsportcivicchorus.org or find us on Facebook.

KIDS' DAY at LITTLE LEAGUE: The 10th Annual Kids' Day at the Peter J. McGovern Little League Museum, South Williamsport, will be held Saturday, March 24 from 10-2. Admission is free for both children and adults. Prizes that day includes a family pack of four tickets to the Little League World Series championship game on August 25, and a family four pack and souvenirs from the Williamsport Crosscutters. Meet the Keystone Little League Team, Curious George and Dugout. Enjoy food, demonstrations, interactive games and enjoy displays about programs, products and activities that can make a difference in your daily life.

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

Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast: The Susquehanna Valley Chapter of Pennsylvanians for Human Life will host a Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, March 24, 2012 beginning at 9:30 a.m. It will be held at the Holiday Inn Express, Williamsport, in the Grand Ball Room. The principal speaker will be J. Howard Langdon. Breakfast Buffet \$13 Adult - \$10 Children 12 & under. RSVP by March 10 to 570-745-3328 or 570-398-0722.

Help to Restore Beauty to the Sock: Lycoming County Disaster Relief Fund at the First Community Foundation Partnership of PA recently awarded funds to Clinton County CleanScapes for flood related cleanup in Lycoming County They are gathering volunteers to remove flood debris and trash from the banks and land area along the Loyalsock Creek. They need:

- Manual labor to pick up and carry debris
- Chainsaws with operators
- Heavy equipment with operators
- Food donations from eating establishments

Date: Saturday, March 24th

Time: Plan to report to your assigned "station" by 9:30 AM followed by lunch at 12:30 PM

Registration: All volunteers must register to the project director by March 20th. Registering will assure that you will have the proper safety gear and will give you a "station" assignment. Register by March 20th to: Elisabeth Lynch McCoy, Project Director, Clinton County CleanScapes clintoncountycleanscapes@yahoo.com or 570-726-3511.

Make Love Blankets for Hospice: Wrap a patient in love at end of life by donating a handmade blanket. Every patient who comes into the Gatehouse receives a handmade blanket and now their supplies are extremely low. Blankets should be approximately 48' x 72'. They should be quilted, knit or crocheted and only made from soft new materials. The blankets can be dropped off at Susquehanna Home Care and Hospice, Divine Providence Hospital, 4th floor, M-F from 8-5pm. For details call 320-7690 or 1-800-848-2213.

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

UNITED CHURCHES CHALLENGE 2012

“HomeMade Missions”

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

Fr. Thomas Ryan, the director of the Canadian Ecumenical Offices in Montreal once wrote a pamphlet called “What Does It Mean to Be Ecumenical?” One of the twelve lessons he shared was that.. “To be Ecumenical we need to be ready to celebrate vitality in the Body of Christ Wherever it is found: What advances the reign of God in any church helps all churches. The churches are not like competing corporations in the business world, so that the stakes of one rises as the lot of others falls. Any loss of divine truth and life is a loss to Christ and his Church. The only triumph a Christian seeks is that of Jesus and his cross. Our rivalry is not with one another, but with sin.”

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

Saving Grace Shelter

Sometimes a HomeMade Mission grows out of an ending...and a new beginning. At times of transition a congregation can see new possibilities that may have been veiled by the traditions of the past. In July 2009 the Pine Street and Grace United Methodist Churches merged their congregations. The Grace Church property at 324 Campbell Street would be vacated. It became important to the folks who worked on the merger that the building be used in a vital ministry as opposed to selling it and seeing it demolished for a parking lot or development property.

At the same time there was an awareness of the fact that the homeless population of Williamsport was growing. There was a need for an emergency shelter where families in crisis could go without being divided up. The result of discussions centering around these two issues was the deeding of the property to the American Rescue Workers through the Lycoming County Family Housing Alliance to be used as a family shelter. This became Saving Grace Shelter, a facility that opened in that building on February 14, 2011. It is a 24 bed shelter which is a safe haven providing 14 days of lodging



for individuals, families and veterans in a homeless crisis. Case managers link them with the resources necessary to help them transition into a more permanent situation. At the anniversary celebration this year the American Rescue Workers announced they had housed 175 adults and 50 children since they opened. Half of those seeking help were employed. It joins Liberty House and Journey House in helping folks in crisis recreate a normal life.

This was a complicated venture calling on the cooperation of ecumenical and community groups in the area, a HomeMade Ministry that partnered a need with a resource to solve local problems with generosity and vision. The stained glass windows and the creative and practical use of space combine to afford a sense of peace and hope in an otherwise chaotic situation. The merged congregations of the Pine Street and Grace United Methodist Churches have indeed provided a gift to the community.

The continuing needs of this ministry are many and varied. To ask how your group can help contact Col. Dawn Astin at the American Rescue Workers.

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

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

Watch for another spotlighted HomeMade Mission in April
and see how God worked with New Covenant United Church of Christ to bring about Journey House.