

# 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](mailto:director@uclc.org)

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 XXVI Number 11

November 10, 2009

### VOLUNTEER NOW FOR 2010 MINISTRIES\*

**W**e are getting ready to fill the ministries schedule for 2010. Clergy and laity are needed:

#### ***Nursing Home and Assisted Living Center Worship:***

Sundays at 2 weekly:

Manor Care South Valley View

Sundays at 2:15 weekly: Manor Care North (2 services)

Sundays at 3: Weekly - Williamsport Home (2 services)

Monthly - The Hillside, The Meadows

Rose View Court, Elmcroft

Wednesdays at 10 weekly - Sycamore Manor

Thursdays at 11 weekly - Presbyterian Home

2:30 weekly - Rose View Center

#### ***Prison Worship Services*** (Sundays weekly)

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

PreRelease Center for Men/for Women - 3:30 p.m.

#### ***Daily Telephone Devotion Line*** - Record from your home.

Volunteers have responsibility for one week at a time.

***Footsteps to Follow Editorials:*** Clergy and people in professional para church leadership are invited to sign up for a week's turn at these newspaper editorials in the Saturday morning Sun Gazette.

**Please** call contact us at [uclc@sunlink.net](mailto:uclc@sunlink.net) or 322-1110 to learn more about these ministries and how you can be part of them. We need you!

### ECUMENICAL THANKSGIVING SERVICES \*

**S**ix of the Ministeriums in our County have reported they are hosting ecumenical Thanksgiving services this year. The times and locations are listed below. All are welcome.

#### **Sunday, November 22 -**

***Pine Street UM Church***, at 7:00 p.m. - 441 Pine Street Wmspt. for the Center City Cluster.

#### **Wednesday, November 25 -**

***St. Lawrence Catholic Church*** at 7:00 p.m. - 800 W Central Ave, S. Wmspt by the South Wmspt. Min.

***St. John's-Newberry UM Church*** at 7:00 p.m. - 2101 Newberry St, Wmspt., by the Newberry Ministerium.

***Heshbon Park UM Church***, at 7:00 p.m. 2898 Heshbon Rd, Wmspt. by the Hepburn Lyc. Ministerium.

***St. James Episcopal Church*** at 7:30 p.m. - 215 South Main St., Muncy by the Muncy Ministerium.

***Montoursville Presbyterian Church*** at 7:30 - 900 Elm St. Montoursville by the Montoursville Ministerium.

**E**-Mail Newsletter: Our United Churches News is now available via e-mail. If you'd like to receive your newsletter this way, please contact Gwen at [uclc@sunlink.net](mailto:uclc@sunlink.net).

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

**WEDNESDAY ECUMENICAL LUNCHESES\***

**J**oin us from 12 to 1 p.m. and you are always assured of 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. (Call Gwen at 419-1464 to check for snow cancellation.)

**NOVEMBER:**

- 11 - **Rev. Ted Corcelius**, Pastor, Christ United Methodist Church, Hughesville, *"Veterans Day"*
- 18 - **Rev. Kenneth Elkin** and **Ms. Kristi Hammaker**, Family Promise Bd. of Dir., *"Church Based Program Almost Ready To Help Homeless Families"*
- 25 - **Ms. Joanne Keihl**, Director of Music, Calvary Baptist and Neisbet United Methodist Churches *"Sounds of Praise for Thanksgiving"*

**DECEMBER:**

- 2 - **Mr. Charles E. Smith**, Lycoming County Coordinator, *"Toys For Tots"*
- 9 - **Colonel Sam Astin**, Officer in Charge, American Rescue Workers, *"Those Christmas Chimneys"*
- 16 - **Revs. R. Kenneth Weiss & Gwen Bernstine**, Pastor, First Church of Christ Disciples & Dir. United Churches, *"Zachariah and Elizabeth Remember"*
- 23 - **"Name that Christmas Song...and let's sing it too"** by **Revs. Aden Wertz, Kevin Brophy, & Gwen Bernstine**, of the planning committee.
- 30 - **Happy Holidays - No Lunch Scheduled**

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*

**P**repare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:4-6) John the Baptist proclaimed these words. We are called as individuals and community to make them real. This is an excellent season to reflect on how we are doing regarding making straight the paths traveled by those in need.

**Lycoming County Unemployment Rate Remains High**

The preliminary rate of unemployment for Lycoming County (Williamsport Metropolitan Statistical Area) for September 2009 was 9.3%, 4% higher than a year earlier.

**State Food Money – Still Waiting** The State Budget finally passed. However, the Central Pennsylvania Food

Bank and the local food pantries – including the United Churches Food Pantry – that rely on it are still waiting to receive money from the state. Adding to the complications is that the state allotment for 2009-10 is unknown at this time. Bills are mounting and the "safety net" is highly strained at a time of increasing need. Some local food pantries and programs that provide meals are reported to be in significant financial distress. The support of individuals, families, churches, civic and business organizations is needed now more than ever.

**World Hunger Reaches Record Levels** The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) announced June 19 that this year, 1.02 billion people will experience acute hunger every day. This represents an 11 percent increase over previous projections. Simply put, 1 out of every 6 human beings will experience acute hunger every day this year. The spike in world hunger is a result of a two-year period of sustained high food prices compounded by the global economic downturn.

**U.S. and U.N. Seek to Comprehensively Address the Underlying Causes of Hunger** On September 28, the U.S. State Department announced that it was seeking, in conjunction with the United Nations and other partners, a comprehensive approach that will advance the following three key objectives to eradicate global hunger:

- Increase sustainable market-led growth across the entire food production and market chain: from the lab to the farm to the market to the table.
- Prevent and treat under-nutrition.
- Increase the impact of humanitarian food assistance and social safety-nets (i.e. temporary assistance that allows those who are poor to protect their assets during unexpected shocks).

For more information visit [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) or [www.state.gov/s/globalfoodsecurity/129952.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/globalfoodsecurity/129952.htm).

**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:

- 11/9-15 - Rev. Robert Lauver
- 11/16-22 - Mrs. Sandy Grier
- 11/23-29 - Rev. Jeff Zetto
- 11/30-12/6 - Rev. Jim Behrens
- 12/7-13 - Pastor Kathy Behrens

*Listen today and tell others about this ministry!*

## SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS\*

J. Morris Smith, Th. D.,  
 Contact at: 322-8568

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

There is no greater feeling of accomplishing the work of the Kingdom of God, of knowing the mercy and love of God, than to take care of the poor in their various afflictions. Shepherd of the Streets and The United Churches Food Pantry need volunteers.

Shepherd of the Streets volunteers greet people, record their visit, get their file, answer the phone, fill hygiene kits, and get bedding. Volunteers are needed for Monday morning, Wednesday morning and afternoon, Thursday morning, and Friday afternoon. The Shepherd office is open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. If you would like to volunteer, or know someone who would volunteer, call (or have them call) 322-6538 and ask for Ruth. She can best be reached in the mornings.

Food pantry volunteers are used to sort food, stock shelves, and guide people through the pantry while they get their food. If you would like to volunteer, or know someone who would volunteer, call (or have them call) Gail Burkhart at 322-1657 on Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday.

HYGIENE ITEMS, BLANKETS, BEDDING, AND BABY NEEDS are constantly needed. The hygiene items should be regular sizes for we mostly serve families. The blankets and bedding are full, twin, and queen sizes. The baby needs, including diapers, need to be regular sizes.

WINTER PRESCRIPTIONS IN CRISIS MODE, means a constant drain on our prescription funds. Medical Assistance does not cover anything liquid. Due to the winter weather, a great amount of throat and bronchial ailments have been striking young and old alike. Along with the regular illnesses and medical demands, we have spent all of our funds in the last two weeks. We, therefore, cannot help people with prescriptions now. Contributions to our RX fund are needed, especially in this flu season.

THE THANKSGIVING BASKET PROGRAM will culminate on November 23<sup>rd</sup> when we expect to give out over 300 food baskets at The Center from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Food items (see box at right) are needed to enlarge the baskets for larger families. Canned goods can be brought to The Center on Monday, November 22 anytime during the day to augment the baskets. The baskets costs \$30 each if you would still like to purchase one.

THE SHEPHERD PROGRAM continues to be a place of hope in our community because you support our general budget and pray for us and those who come feeling hopeless.

Thank you for all you do!

### THANKSGIVING BASKETS

Dr. J. Morris Smith - 322-6538

Ms. Gail Burkhart - 322-1657 or 322-5234

**I**t's an opportunity  
 to serve others  
 by providing a

#### Thanksgiving Basket

The holiday season will soon be here. Plans are underway to provide a complete Thanksgiving Basket to hundreds of families in our area who would otherwise miss the blessing of this festive dinner. For this to happen we need the support of the community. Contributions of time, food and financial aid will make this project a success. Volunteers are needed to receive food and fill boxes on Nov. 23rd and finally to distribute the baskets of food on Nov. 24th.

Food items to supplement the basic package for larger families and to provide after the holiday meals are also needed. These items will be received at The Center, 600 Campbell Street, Williamsport, on Monday, November 23rd from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We'll need items like:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Canned Juices</b>     | <b>Pasta Sauce and Pastas and Rice</b> |
| <b>Canned Fruit</b>      | <b>Peanut Butter &amp; Jelly</b>       |
| <b>Canned Vegetables</b> | <b>Canned Soup - Dry Mix for Soup</b>  |
| <b>Cereal</b>            | <b>Baby Food and Formula</b>           |
| <b>Bisquick</b>          | <b>Cake Mixes - Frosting Mixes</b>     |

Each Thanksgiving Basket will have approximately 25 to 28 pounds of food for each family and will cost at least \$30. Cash support of \$9,000 will supply the food for the basic holiday meals to over 350 families in our community. Please help in whatever way your heart directs you. Financial donations should be sent to the Shepherd of the Streets Ministry, marked Thanksgiving Basket Fund, 202 East Third Street, Williamsport, PA 17701. For more information or to volunteer services call the numbers above.

## "HUNGER AWARENESS MONTHS"\*

People of all ages, races, and faiths - from all parts of Lycoming County - will again work especially hard in October and November to increase their awareness, prayer, action and advocacy regarding hunger and poverty in our communities, nation and the world. Special events in our county began with CROP Walks on October 11 and will end with the Shepherd/Food Pantry Thanksgiving Basket Collection. But all year long we reach out to help those who are hungry.

### FOOD PANTRY \*

*Gail Burkhardt, Coordinator 322-1657*

**O**ur United Churches Food Pantry provides a three day supply of food to those in need. This October we helped about 237 adults, 128 children, and 55 elderly, for a total of 420 persons in 171 households.

The month of November traditionally brings us back to our 'roots' of family and friends and our God to offer thanks for all that we have. The folks at the Food Pantry, both clients and volunteers alike, are no different. All take time to give thanks for the many blessings that we have.

- We are blessed to have each other. Many close friendships have been forged as volunteers work together and as clients wait to be served and also between clients and volunteers. Friendships also blossom as we see familiar faces bringing donations of food to help feed the needy.
- The thankful looks on the faces of our clients make us realize what a tremendous need we're able to fill. Sometimes the blessing of conversations of our volunteers with our clients fills a greater need than even the food that we supply!
- There is also joy of working in close physical proximity with two ministries that complement the services of the Food Pantry (Sojourner Truth Ministries & The Shepherd of the Streets.)
- The beneficence of ample food donations so that we may supply the hunger needs of the folks that come in our doors.
- The blessings of the prayers that are offered for the workers at the pantry, the clients who use the services of the pantry and the generous patrons who donate food to the pantry.

We are thankful! These are a few of the things that come to mind when counting our "Pantry" blessings.

All of you reading this small article are so much a part of what we do and we so appreciate you. You're in our thoughts and prayers often. From all of us, we wish your families a holiday of blessings and happiness!

You knew this was coming, we always need donations of:

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>spaghetti sauce</i>   | <i>chunky soups</i>         |
| <i>oodles-of-noodles</i> | <i>canned fruits</i>        |
| <i>coffee</i>            | <i>powdered drink mixes</i> |
| <i>pasta noodles</i>     | <i>sugar</i>                |

We also need *clean plastic bags*

Your donations are best brought Monday mornings from 9:30 - Noon. Persons needing food should call and leave their name and number on the answering machine to make an appointment to receive food on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 - 3 and at other times by appointment.

### SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

**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 out 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 or \$1 on Super Bowl Sunday (February 7, 2010).

You 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. Your reporting of your collection enables the full impact of this simple act of caring to be determined and announced. In 2009 the grand total generated was \$10,258,589.

Be part of a modern day miracle by getting your church on board. This ecumenical effort was started by a few churches in 1933 and has grown to 13,720 groups this past year. Information is available at [www.souperbowl.org](http://www.souperbowl.org).

### 30 HOUR FAMINE

**W**orld Vision's 30 Hour Famine is a worldwide movement of students who are serious about serving God and fighting hunger - all on an empty stomach. For 30 hours, participants get a taste of hunger by not eating - something more than a billion people around the world experience every day. And by doing fundraising activities, community service projects, and learning more about the facts of world hunger, students are changed in amazing ways as they help others and save lives.

Youth leaders sign up with World Vision and receive a Welcome Kit in the mail ~3 months before your event. What your group does during the 30 hours is really up to you. Choose activities, community service ideas, educational tools, and games that will work best. At the end of the 30 hours, it's time to break the fast. Many groups choose to start with communion. Be sure to share about their Famine experience with the whole congregation. For more information contact [www.30hourfamine.org](http://www.30hourfamine.org) or 1-800-7-FAMINE.

## YOKEFELLOW NEWS

*Evadna Cline, Director, Yokefellow Center - 326-6868*

If we were to take a survey of the people in our churches and community regarding the question of the role of the church in reaching prisoners and ex-prisoners, I would estimate that many persons might be caught off guard because this may be a question that has not faced them before.

When Jesus, in Matt. 25 was teaching about the coming of His Kingdom, and the criterion on which we all will be judged, He used the following standards; When I was hungry, you gave me food, when I was thirsty, you gave me a drink, when I was a stranger, you took me in: naked, you gave me clothes, and when I was sick, you visited me: and when I was in prison, you came to help me also.

I assume that most Christians would pass the test on the first five standards with flying colors! Then, that is where many like to stop. But, that is not where Jesus stopped! To me it appears just as vital that the last test of our faithfulness, visitation of those in prison, will be as much a part of our judgment as feeding the hungry, giving drink to those who are thirsty, welcoming strangers into our homes, offering clothing to those in need, and visiting the sick.

Steve Mays, a former prisoner says, "When I consider the situation former prisoners are in today, my heart breaks. I know their pain, their needs. And I know how much God loves them and how much the Church needs to step up and embrace them." Sometimes we forget that people can change. Certainly the corrections system offers little hope or help for a positive future. In 2007 the state of California incarcerated 173,312 citizens and illegal immigrants. Nearly 70% of parolees in that state end up back in prison.

*The Press Enterprise* reports, "More than half of California inmates need treatment for drug addiction, yet only a tiny fraction receive such counseling. The picture is similar for alcoholism." The article states, "Giving inmates with no job skills and untreated addictions \$200 upon release—and little else—is a recipe for failure. And, although the stats I have quoted are from California, our own state faces the same situations.

The Council of Yokefellow Prison Ministry is planning a pastor's lunch on Thursday, December 10 from noon to 1:00 P.M. as a way of seeking more involvement from churches in the recovery/healing process of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Invitations will be going out in about 10 days through the United Churches office. The lunch will be free, and it will be held at the St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Annunciation Fleming Parish Center, 720 W. Fourth St. Attendees will have an opportunity to hear from some former prisoners whose lives were touched by the ministry of Yokefellow Prison Ministry.

Please pray for Yokefellow Prison Ministry as it pre-

pares for this event. And please call the office at 326-6868 to reserve your opportunity to learn what God is doing through this ministry.

The church's outreach to prisoners and ex-prisoners is needed today more than ever before. Whether those men and women coming out of prison are fellow believers or still searching, the Church needs to be the place where they find faith and love, prepared by God in advance.

And, if we do what needs to be done for these persons in need, at the judgment when the Master proclaims, "I was in prison and you came to visit me"; the King will commend us saying, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of those brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me."

### SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY\*

**Operation Christmas Child:** There are two shoebox collection points in our county. Pine Street United Methodist Church, 441 Pine Street, Wmspt will collect them 11/16 to 11/23. Drop-off hours are: Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Tuesday 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and Tuesday evening 6 - 8:30, Friday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m, Saturday, Noon - 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 - 5 p.m. Please use the door at the north west corner of the church facing the parking lot. For information, contact Betty Lou Wheeland at 570-326-3685. St. John Lutheran, 229 South Broad Street in downtown Jersey Shore will also be receiving shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child, 11/16-22, from 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Donors are reminded to use regular size shoe boxes, no boot boxes or tubs.

**Prison Fellowship** has approx. 81 children from the immediate Williamsport area who need sponsors for **Angel Tree** this year. Angel Tree is a program to connect and strengthen the relationships between incarcerated parents and their children at Christmas by having individuals purchase and deliver gifts to the children on behalf of the parent. It is a great opportunity for local churches to reach local families for Christ, and help to break the cycle of crime in our communities. Children of incarcerated parents are at a far greater risk of becoming involved in criminal activities, even at very young ages. To learn more or get involved, call 570-742-4209 or email [lmackley@juno.com](mailto:lmackley@juno.com).

**Old copies of Guidepost magazine** are needed. There will be a box to receive them at the United Church office on November 30, 2009. These will be placed in the Christmas bags that are prepared each year for the 1400 women at the State Correctional Institution at Muncy. You may also include the small devotional booklets. The project is being sponsored by Aglow, a Christian women's organization that has a chapter in Williamsport.



### CREATION CORNER

*from our Christian Social Concerns Committee*

Marcellus Shale Gas Drilling

And Carbon Footprint Reductions

A recent meeting hosted by state environmental officials about the disposal of "fracking" water following natural gas drilling here in the Marcellus Shale geological formation, a layer of bedrock formed from deep ocean floor sediments 365 million years ago. This question was posed: "Is this (the Marcellus Shale) here by design, or chance?" The question wasn't addressed. And we could ask, since it is here, should we use this fossil fuel with our new technologies despite environmental risks, or leave it alone and promote renewable energy strategies? It appears that a latter-day "gold rush" is on. Compare it to the historic rush here for timber and coal resources and the consequences.

A similar inquiry can be made of what atmospheric conditions, by design or chance, are optimal for the continuation of life on earth as we have known it. A consensus is growing that 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in our air seems to be the ideal for maintaining the integrity of God's creation (see [www.350.org](http://www.350.org)). Because the earth is now at 387 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>, and growing, the target goal being proposed in the belief that little we can do to stop global warming in the short run, and that instead we need to prepare for adjusting to such carbon pollution and consequences.

People with an ethic of having a personal and social responsibility for a healthy ecology will continue to make strides to reduce their "carbon footprint." For example, in the United Kingdom there is a national effort to cut emissions by 10% in 2010 (see [www.1010uk.org](http://www.1010uk.org)).

Even knowing that personal change doesn't equal the political change needed, lifestyles ("good or bad") do have an effect when multiplied by millions of people engaged in them. In the European Union, by banning certain incandescent light bulbs in favor of compact fluorescent lights and LEDs, some 40 billion kilowatt-hours a year are expected to be saved by 2020, equal to the output of 10 power plants.

In our region a utility is helping customers calculate their carbon footprint, thus providing a tool to start a personal and household carbon reduction program. See the energy analyzer or e-power page at [www.pplelectric.com](http://www.pplelectric.com). The average U.S. household carbon footprint is 24.4 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. Reducing electric energy usage will also help offset the 30% bill increase expected in January 2010.

Among institutions of higher learning the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment has been signed onto by over 600 schools, (30+% of the higher-education student population.) Institutional data is assessed by the Clean Air---Cool Planet Carbon Calculator with a

goal of neutralizing greenhouse gases (GHGs).

In 2010 many U.S. corporate emitters of GHGs will begin tracking nearly 85% of the GHGs linked to global warming. Energy pollution prematurely kills at least 18,000 people every year and costs \$120 billion in unaccounted damage nationwide, a national study reported recently.

Finally, in reference to the first paragraph of this column, one PA church has led a gas drilling discussion using Biblical and theological considerations. See [www.beach-lakeumc.com/gasdrilling.php](http://www.beach-lakeumc.com/gasdrilling.php).

### SPECIAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES \*

**C**hristmas at The Salvation Army comes early and they are preparing to pack 1000 food baskets to distribute to the needy residents of Lycoming County. Their goal is to serve all of the underprivileged and are asking for your help in filling their food baskets. Needed are:

|                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Canned cranberry sauce | Canned kernel corn           |
| Canned creamed corn    | Canned Green beans           |
| Canned soup            | Boxed Stuffing               |
| Pop Tarts              | Cake Mixes/Brownies/Desserts |

Their distribution day is scheduled for Dec. 22, and these items are needed no later than Monday Dec 7. In addition to providing food baskets, The Salvation Army provides toys for over 1600 children 12 and under. If you would like to help in that capacity call Dorothy at 326-9187.

**C**hristmas Music: The Williamsport Music Club will present its annual Christmas music by Candlelight on Sunday, December 6, at 4 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, Market & Ross Streets. The offering will be given to the United Churches Food Pantry.

**W**inter Craft Show: Trinity United Methodist Church, 1971 Lycoming Creek Rd, Wmspt. will hold a Winter Craft Show on Saturday, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> from 8 - 3. Vendors are needed, with a cost of \$20 per 12 x 12 space. Please call Linda at (570) 326-2922 to reserve yours today. Bake goods will be available. There will be a luncheon from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and a Silent Auction will be held with proceeds to benefit the Trinity's Volunteers in Mission Team trip to Northern Georgia in January 2010.

**F**REE Organ: A Lowery Electric Organ is available. It works well, but may need tuned up. Call (570) 323-8011 and leave a message.

**F**und Raising Concert for New Life Mission & Sojourner Truth Ministries will be held on Saturday, Dec 12 at 4 p.m. at Sojourner Truth Ministries, 501 High Street, Williamsport. Contact Rev. Velinda Webb, 971-7117 for more information.

**ANNUAL ASSEMBLY NEWS**

**W**e gathered around tables at St. Mark's Lutheran Church to celebrate the ministry that we do together all year. Sometimes we forget how important it is to claim every opportunity we have to celebrate the blessings God gives us. The meal and hospitality of St. Mark's congregation certainly was a blessing to celebrate!

The story of the ministry of United Churches must bring a sparkle to Jesus' eye and a smile to his mouth as we reach out with his love to our community... feeding the hungry (over 2,000 households this year got an emergency supply of food), helping those in need (over 5,000 were helped this year through our Shepherd Ministry), bringing hope to those in prison, and helping people draw closer to God as we go out to nursing homes and assisted living centers (we do over 800 services each year). Even the ability to share news about our life in a newsletter like this is something to celebrate. I'm often asked if counties near us have such a means of communication - and they don't.

Our Financial report shows a deficit in income of about \$50,000 that is being made up as needed by invested funds. So far in 2009 we have withdrawn \$26,275.14 from investments. The extraordinary news is that our total assets are only about \$6,000 less than they were in 2008, so the economy is getting better - for all of us!

A 2010 budget of \$175,484.00 was approved, reflecting cautious optimism with a 3% salary increase for the first time in several years for staff. This was the largest "extra" in the budget - so we are still being extremely careful.

The 2009 Ecumenical Service Award was presented in memory of Sr. Celine Marie Smith, IHM who died this past year after a fall. She was honored for the vision that guided her to dedicate her life to easing the pain and brokenness of the human spirit though out 49 years as one of the Sisters of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Peace and justice and hope were very important to her and seen throughout her ministry. She loved people of all ages, serving as a teacher in early childhood and elementary grades, a chaplain in a hospital, in a woman's prison, and in a nursing home, and as an activities director in an assisted living facility. Sr. Celine always identified with those who were hurting and worked to make others aware of brokenness, and encouraged efforts to begin healing. She also shared her faith with others in many ways, but not quite as effectively as when she performed liturgical dance. We miss her, and feel blessed to have had her as part of our community.

Fun was the order of the evening. We'd begun the evening with a puzzle of a church that you had to put together and then identify. Folks also got to play "Concentration"

with people and places related to United Churches. After the business meeting we tuned in to United Churches Game Show Network to play - - "Name That Hymn" - - Jeopardy (with the categories of Lycoming County Churches / Ecumenism in Lycoming County) and then we played "Are You Smarter Than A 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday School Student?" A great time was had by all - and everyone enjoyed the prizes - Hershey's Kisses.

New members elected to the United Churches Board of Directors for 2010 were: Rev. Jeff Zetto, Rev. David Culbertson, Rev. Shane Kirby and Rev. Larry Waltz. Taking a new position on the board is Pastor Kathy Behrens. Two spots are open at this time, a representative from the Montgomery Ministerium and someone to develop the Youth Committee.

Rotating off the board with distinguished service are; Mrs. Karen Wingate, Mrs. Evadna Cline, Rev. Tom Reeder, and Rev. Glenn McCreary. Rev. Gregory Lake has taken a sabbatical because of health reasons. Rev. Roosevelt Brown and Rev. Mark Messner both moved out of the area.

Special thanks to our excellent staff, who passionately work with many of the 240+ congregations in our county to help them build relationship to work together in ministry and to better understand each other.

Mrs. Linda Winter

United Churches Administrative Assistant

J. Morris Smith, Th.D.

Shepherd of the Streets

Mrs. Ruth Hague

Shepherd of the Streets Administrative Assistant

Ms. Gail Burkhart

Food Pantry Coordinator

Mrs. Sharon Comini

Campus Ministry Coordinator

Rev. Gwen Bernstine

Executive Director, United Churches

**CAMPUS MINISTRY \***

***Sharon Comini, Coordinator,***

Contact at: 419-5376 or [ucm@uclc.org](mailto:ucm@uclc.org)

**T**he end of the fall semester is just around the corner! We will be handing out study bags on Dec. 4 for the students to use during Finals Week. Any churches wishing to make study bags for the students will need to have them ready by November 30. I will be happy to come by your church and pick them up. Our spring break mission trip is planned for March 6-12, 2010. We will be working on housing projects for churches in either western Pennsylvania or West Virginia.