



UNITED CHURCHES' NEWS

UNITED CHURCHES OF LYCOMING COUNTY
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Office Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Thursday

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January 8, 2019

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JOIN US *

This year we again join with Christians around the world who set aside these eight days from January 18-25 as a special time to share the prayer of Jesus, "that all may be one... that the world may believe." (John 17:21).

We also join Indonesian Christians of many different traditions in pointing to the glorious power of God to draw people together in the desire for Christian Unity as we explore the theme for 2019, "*Justice and only justice you shall pursue*" -Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

The following events have been scheduled to help in your observance which also includes the events in memory of Martin Luther King which are found on page 2.

All Week - 1/18-25 - Special devotions for each day will be available on the Telephone Devotion Line. They are reachable 24/7 by calling 570-322-5762.

Friday 1/18 - Service of Prayer at St. Boniface Catholic Church, 326 Washington Boulevard, Williamsport at 6:30 pm. Begin this Octave of Prayer that began 90

years ago, by joining your brothers and sisters in prayer. Everyone is welcome! This is sponsored by our local Lutheran / Roman Catholic Dialogue Group.

1/20 - Ecumenical Sunday - This is the day to celebrate what God is doing through many ecumenical agencies - local, regional, national and international - that make up the modern ecumenical movement. Some liturgical suggestions for your worship service can be found in the newsletter supplement at www.uclc.org. Your congregation could celebrate this day with a pulpit exchange or by fellowship with a sister congregation.

1/23 - Wednesday Lunch - "Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue" will be the theme of the program for the Ecumenical Lunch held at Pine Street United Methodist Church, 441 Pine St., Williamsport. Rev. Gwen Bernstine, will be the speaker. The luncheon is \$6. For reservations call 570-322-1110.

1/24 - The Diocese of Scranton will host **An Ecumenical Celebration of God's Word** at 12:10 pm in the Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton. All are welcome to attend. In addition CTV: Catholic Television will broadcast the service live on Comcast channel 016.

- *MLKing info continued on page 2*

Follow us and others on Facebook at "Walking With God in Lycoming County"



EVENTS IN MEMORY OF
THE REV. DR MARTIN
LUTHER KING, JR.

Theme: "Awakening To Social
Change #GetWoke

Dream Week Activities:

Sponsored by the Beloved Community Council

"We have before us the glorious opportunity to inject a new dimension of love into the veins of our civilization." - Martin Luther King Jr.

Saturday, January 19 at 10 am - Peace Walk and Music

Celebration: The Peace Walk begins at First United Methodist Church, 604 Market St., Williamsport, followed by refreshments at the church. A Musical Celebration in Honor of Richard James with a celebration of choirs singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in the Sanctuary, 10:45 - 11:30.

Sunday, January 20 - Alternatives to Violence Workshop will be held from 3-5:30 pm at Christ Episcopal Church, 426 Mulberry St. Williamsport, hosted by Tony White.

Monday, January 20 at 9 am - Day of Service "More Than A Meal": STEP/AmeriCorps will coordinate a Meal Packaging Event for our Day of Service Project which will be held from 9-12 at the Lycoming College Recreation Center, 700 College Place. The meal kits will benefit our community members in need in partnership with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. Refreshments and child care will be provided.

Tuesday, January 23 - Round Table Discussion, "Trust Across Generations" will be held at 6:30 p.m at City Alliance Church, 420 Elmira Street, Williamsport.

Thursday, January 24 - you will have the opportunity to spend "***An Evening with Damon Young***". "With work that vacillates from anthropological satire and absurdist racial insights to razor sharp cultural critique and unflinching indictments of privilege and bias, Damon Young engages audiences in thoughtful contemplation of modern society." The event will be at 7:00 p.m. in Clarke Chapel at Lycoming College.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter" - Martin Luther King Jr.

MORE VOLUNTEER NEEDED*

We need more volunteers to fill the ministries schedule for 2019. Both clergy & laity can help. Currently there are 34 openings. Pat Jenkins, coordinator, reminds us, "There are no special requirements to participate in the nursing home ministry. All that is needed is the passion and saying yes to God when the desire is placed on your heart to share God's Word and message with others."



"It is truly quite a blessing to offer residents the ability to worship with folks of their own denomination as well as with a variety of Christian congregations represented by our United Churches of Lycoming County. These services mean far more to them than we realize. It is an honorable tradition of long standing. Please help this valuable ministry continue."

Leaders are needed in the following places....

These Nursing Homes (on Sunday afternoon)

Sundays at 2: Manor Care South

Valley View AristaCare

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

Rose View Center

Sundays at 3: Williamsport Home (2 services)

The County Prison (on Sunday afternoon)

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

Pre-Release Center for Women - 3:30 p.m.

Footsteps to Follow Editorials: There are still a couple slots open if someone forgot to sign up for 2019. Clergy and people in professional parachurch leadership are invited to share in these newspaper editorials.

Please contact us at director@ucl.org or 570-322-1110 to be part of these ministries. ***We need you!***

FAITH UNBOUND
IN LYCOMING COUNTY

Join Lou Kolb as he hosts the second of our podcast series to better acquaint you with the ministries and activities of United Churches. This show features **Dr. J. Morris Smith**

and the Shepherd of the Streets Ministry. Check it out on Youtube and let us know what you think.

https://youtu.be/7TZNJ_ILT11

The first podcast was an overview of the ministries of United Churches. If you haven't listened yet, check it out at

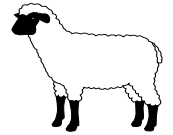
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUZ9MGYYkRo>



SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS*

J. Morris Smith, Th.D.,
570-322-6538, shepherd@uclc.org

After Christmas Reflection



Have you ever noticed that when it is the season for celebrating the birth of Jesus, a spirit of concern comes upon almost everyone. Television shows and movies become obsessed with mercy and grace, especially toward the poor. Some version of Scrooge can be seen throughout the season, and even though I have seen them all, I will invariably watch the whole thing again (this year, it was Albert Finney as the old miser, and it was as excellent as when I first saw it in a theater years ago.)

Jesus and the surroundings of His birth spawn a spirit of renewal of hope, compassion, mercy and love. As Christians, the Christ has been born in us and the Spirit of God lives in us, and He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for us according to God’s will. As the Shepherd of the Streets, it is always a joy to see such among the poor as they enter into the compassion of Christmas by not letting their poverty be their definition, who have learned to not allow poverty to interfere with their gratitude for the Light that shines on them.

To me, the real meaning of the birth in Bethlehem is so that the lowest can participate in the promise of the Highest. With only truth to gird her labor, righteousness to protect her heart, peace to give her readiness, faith to allay her fears, hope to steady her nerves, and joy to numb her stress, she brought forth the Holy Infant, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger. What better warmth than swaddling, what better place for the Seed of Abraham than a feeding trough.

The angels watching in awe knew that only those whose hearts are simple would be able to see, only those detached from worldly concerns would be able to understand, only those whose souls are unveiled, whose minds are uncluttered would be able to know. So in the tedium of simple shepherd’s lives, their field was lit with the refulgence of God’s glory, and they responded with awe and reverence, a fear that accompanies the presence of holiness. To the shepherds, the angels gave a simple sign; a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. As seed portends new life, so this Seed will be new life for all of goodwill.

With cheerful consent their response was: “Let us go unto Bethlehem and let us see this thing of God.” Overwhelming their fear, their appeal was to God, “let us go... let us see”; as children crowding a store window of toys on Christmas display. I am always in awe of those whose faith

is voiced in the language of gift. Let me have faith, rather than the presumptuousness of entitlement. Holy poverty does not seek itself, for it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The shepherds went straightway and found this thing of God, just as they were told, an infant in humble grotto’s lair, swaddled, and lying in manger stone. Unlearned in doubt that explains things away, they came and saw that That of this. This is that which Mary kept, pondering it in her heart.

Do I find such Holy poverty among those seeking help and counsel at Shepherd of the Streets?

Yes, indeed. There are, no doubt, the others seeking their own comfort, but I would say the majority we see are on their journey in the simplicity of their poverty (mental, spiritual, physical, and/or social), and like those shepherds, caste by government and society as “the lowest” do not have so far to go to see the thing of God and believe. Unlike most of us make the journey laden with the cares of this world, making the journey long and difficult. Like the rich young ruler, we make the journey hard because we want to prove our worth and be rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven. In judgment, we want to hear “well done, good and faithful servant.” But, first we must “hear”, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.”

- Peace and grace for this new year.

Morris and the staff

Shepherd of the Streets, (Location - 320 Park Ave.)

Mailing Address: PO Box 2184

Williamsport, PA 17703

Thank you for your donation of hygiene items, baby needs, and/or bedding. Almost every person who comes through our doors is blessed by one or more of the hygiene items you send . The list follows:

- Toothpaste a Toothbrushes**
- Shaving Cream and Razors**
- Shampoo and Conditioner**
- Women’s Hygiene Products**
- Towels and Wash Cloths**
- Bedding and Blankets**



- Tissues and Toilet Paper and Paper Towels**

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Soap | Deodorant | Combs |
| Baby Diapers | Baby Shampoo | Baby Oil |
| Baby Q-Tips | Baby Wipes | |

THE PLACE TO BE FOR LUNCH WEDNESDAYS *

Join us Wednesdays for lunch and an interesting program! The lunch line opens about 11:45 with a home cooked \$6 lunch, warm ecumenical fellowship and a thoughtful program designed to enrich your life mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. 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 United Churches 570-322-1110 helps preparations. To check on cancellations this winter call Gwen at 570-419-1464.

JANUARY:

- 9- **Dr. J. Morris Smith, Th.D.**, Shepherd of the Streets, *"We've Transitioned to Medical Only"*
- 16- **Ms. Dana Brigandi and Ms. Robin Glossner**, Staff at the James V. Brown Library, *"Happenings and Connect Williamsport"*
- 23- **Rev. Gwen Bernstine**, Staff, United Churches, *"Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue"*
- 30- **Tom Wetzel**, Pianist, *"Winter Wonderland"*

FEBRUARY:

- 6- **Rev. Kenneth Elkin**, Lutheran Pastor, Retired, *"The Rain in Portugal Falls Mainly...Everywhere ... and the Pilgrimage Continues"*
- 13- **Pastor Tammey Aichner**, First Church of Christ Disciples, *"Love"*
- 20- **Mrs. Patty Gohrs**, United Churches Staff, *"The Most Fascinating Person I've Ever Met, Dr. Francis V. Costello"*
- 27- **Mr. Bill Smith**, Member of New Covenant United Church of Christ, *"Getting Ready for Shrove Tuesday: The History of Fausnaughts"*

Plan to attend! Bring a friend! It's for regular folks like you and me! Join us this week!

LOCAL EVENT

IF:Gathering Livestream on February 8 & 9: Tens of thousands of women worldwide will participate via a livestream from a sold out event in Dallas, Texas. With a variety of cultures and denominations represented, these women hold one thing in common: they want to live like God is real. The IF:Gathering provides space for women to wrestle with essential questions of faith, to dream, and to connect during a two-day gathering. For general information visit: <https://www.ifgathering.com>.

Here local leaders are hosting a livestream gathering, and area women are invited to join as part of this international event. Sponsoring churches are First United Methodist and City Alliance. The local event location is 2400 W. 4th St., the **Williamsport Area High School Auditorium** on Fri., Feb 8th, 7-10 pm, Sat., Feb 9th, 10 am - 6 pm. For details contact Melissa Lundy at lundy515@comcast.net. Registration is \$20 at <https://ifwilliamsport.iflocal.com>.

DIAL - A - DEVOTION *

Have you called yet?
The number is 570-322-5762.
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 are:

- 1/7-13 Mrs. Patty Gohrs
- 1/14-17 Mrs. Tiffany Haller
- 1/18-27 Rev. Gwen Bernstine
- 1/28-2/3 Mrs. Pat Jenkins
- 2/10-17 Mrs. Dorothy Wagner
- 2/18-24 Mrs. Sandra Grier

A Great Chorus....



The 72nd Annual Assembly was held at South Williamsport United Methodist Church on

11/29/18. The following officers and members of the board were elected for 2019.

- President Rev. Kevin Brophy
- First Vice President. Mr. Lou Kolb
- Second Vice President Mrs. Phyllis Girven
- Third Vice President Ms. Linda Jackson
- Treasurer Mrs. Virginia Borek
- Ecumenism Chair Rev. Bradley Walmer
- Social Concerns Chair Pastor Joseph Hopkins
- Education Chair Mrs. Dawn Blanchard
- Institutional Min Mrs. Pat Jenkins
- Food Pantry Chair Mrs. Phyllis Girven
- Broadcasting Chair Mr. Lou Kolb
- Interfaith Committee Chair Rev. Jeffrey LeCrone
- Shepherd Chair Ms. Yvonne Shenuski
- Campus Ministry Chair. Mrs. Julie Bittner
- Nominating Committee Chair. Mrs. Sandra Grier
- Newspaper Chair. Prof. Joan Schell
- Personnel Committee Chair Mrs. Kathy Kolb

Members At Large:

- Mrs. Tiffany Haller
- Ms. Sara Bower
- Rev. Joshua Reinsburrow
- Rev. Velinda Smith
- Rev. Michael McCormick
- Rev. Mark Brumbach
- Rev. Max Furman
- Rev. David Trostle
- Pastor Kathy Burkhardt
- Dr. Terry Belles
- Mr. George Cassella
- Rev. Susan Halverstadt

STAFF: Executive Director: Rev. Gwen Bernstine
Shepherd of the Streets: J. Morris Smith, Th. D.
UCLC Adm. Assistant: Mrs. Patty Gohrs
Shepherd Secretary: Mrs. Nancy Long
Food Pantry Coord.: Ms. Mona Rundio
Campus Min. Coord.: Pastor Tammey Aichner

POVERTY: A FAITH-BASED RESPONSE

The Christian Social Concerns Committee

When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you (Luke 12:13-14). In short invite all in need and those who lack power and influence. Today others could easily be added to this list. In charity: whom should we add? In justice: whom should we join with and advocate for regarding equity and fairness in society?

Farm Bill passage – The Farm Bill sets a wide range of policies for a five-year period. An important part of the Bill is that the legislation protects and strengthens the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [food stamps] and makes key improvements to international food aid programs. “This is great news for struggling families,” said Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. “The Farm Bill is one of Bread’s top priorities. The legislation that passed today will be an important lifeline for millions of families experiencing hunger in both the United States and around the world.” www.bread.org



Farm Bill – the good news – In addition to protecting and strengthening SNAP, domestically, the bill provides additional funding for Employment and Training pilot projects – including funding prioritizing specific populations such as older Americans, formerly incarcerated individuals, people with disabilities, and families facing multi-generational poverty. It also makes permanent nutrition incentives in SNAP and funds a new program allowing healthcare providers to give prescriptions for low-income people to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Farm Bill passage and SNAP (food stamps) – the not-so-good news – The legislation that finally was passed by Congress rejected House of Representatives proposals to add work requirements for some food stamp recipients. Although Congress rejected such policies, the White House has re-instated these rules after signing the Bill. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture has announced rules that will apply work rules for some food stamp recipients.

The Flight into Egypt – At this time of the year we might read the following scripture: “. . . the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you’” (Matt 2:13). What does this scripture say to us today regarding those coming to the United States while fleeing hunger and poverty? What should our response be?

FOOD PANTRY *

Mona Rundio, Coordinator 570-322-1657

E-mail - foodpantry@uclc.org

It’s a New Year, time to adopt a new attitude with love for those in the dark. We all have sinned and lived in darkness at some points in our lives. During such times of need or fear many look for a way to be saved by the Lord. This is only done by a faithful helping hand in the community in which we live.

One way you can be a reliable servant of the Lord is by donating food to the pantry. Here at the pantry we communicate, serve and provide many attributes of faith to our neighbors in need. The families that receive food at our pantry are so THANKFUL to us, the churches, and all who donate food!

This new year, after an overwhelming Harvest collection from many churches, we are in need of the following products:

- Cereal* *Oatmeal* *Soups* *Ramen Noodles*
- Coffee* *Juices* *Pop Tarts* *Hot Chocolate*
- Popcorn* *Healthy Snacks*

Just one extra item you have in grocery cart adds up in the collection box at your church and on our shelves to reach out with love to a hungry family. [Please check the dates on all the items you donate, for we pay to throw away old items away that could be harmful!]

Now that you know of one small thing that you can do to serve the Lord and your community as a great servant, go and get the year started off on the right path of giving to others. Know that you are lifted up in prayer, as well as THANKED for your generosity. Have a fantastic 2019.

We are located at the rear of 320 Park Avenue and our hours are: Monday – 9-12 for donations /stocking
Tuesdays – 10:15 – 2:30 for clients
Thursdays – 10:15 – 2:30 for clients

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

SouperBowl Sunday is one way to help ministries that assist 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 funds.

Groups call 1-800-358-7687 on 2/3/19, the day of the game (between noon and 5 pm) to report the amount collected, then send your foods/food to the charity of your choice. Reporting your collecting enables the full impact of this simple act of caring to be determined and announced. For details go to www.souperbowl.org.

In 2018 the grant total generated was \$8,148,103 with 3782 participating groups and 2,560 charities helped.

CREATION CORNER*Christian Social Concerns Committee*

Greening Our Parishes

With calls to all energy-consuming sectors to reduce their consumption so as to reduce our carbon-footprint, our churches are working to respond. Consider the following creation care concerns in your response...



- Examine key biblical passages and denominational social statements.
- Review the ecological thought from those historically witnessed as saints and seers.
- Read articles on eco-theology by contemporary authors from your faith tradition.
- Look at your parish property practices perhaps taking an energy and purchasing audit.
- Consider the environmental perspectives of secular groups.
- Propose the start of a parish environmental ministry.
- Promote a dialogue within parish ministries for education, worship, music, outreach, etc.
- Make a priority list of quick and easy items to accomplish in the areas of recycling, avoiding toxic chemicals and plastic containers, reducing water consumption, car-pooling, paper use, insulation, thermostat settings, garbage/refuse reduction, etc.
- Use the liturgical year and secular observances to raise up creation care concerns such as the spring Soil and Water Stewardship, Arbor Day, Earth Day, the Environmental Sabbath, St. Francis Day, Harvest Home, CROP Walk, Thanksgiving, seasonal changes, etc.
- Provide "take-home" messages to parishioners about possible lifestyle changes.
- Urge the understanding of how saving money on parish utility bills intersects with environmental stewardship.
- Use outdoor camp experiences to learn from nature.
- Help people who acknowledge their concern for God's creation to choose some "next steps."
- Raise up topics for study group consideration: technology, pollution, consumerism, resource depletion, energy conservation and efficiency, toxic chemicals, global climate disruption, etc.
- Develop a list of resources; bibliographies of books, periodicals and articles; social media; liturgical resources; faith based resolutions; films, documentaries, cds; dvds; podcasts; novels; poetry; biographies; travel and nature writings, etc.
- Ask environmental questions! Ask about boycotts, fossil fuels, legal actions, petitions, endorsements, demonstrations. Your questions should be concerned with "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"; "For where your treasure is there your heart will also be", "talking the talk and walking the walk", etc.

Much within this list of 'pointers' are derived from Greening The Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice by Frederick W. Krueger, and some from this columnist.



Tammey Aichner, Coordinator, ucm@uclc.org

In a few weeks, the students will return to campus. Our Bible Study will start back up on Monday nights. The students will continue to get together throughout the week to grow in God's Word through prayer group and worship service. UCM will continue with Jesus and Java on Wednesdays. New for this semester...at the students' suggestion...we will be kicking off Random Acts of Kindness on campus. I will keep you posted as to ways you could help with that. Next month's newsletter will have our soup order form in it. This is our only fundraiser of the year. Please consider supporting UCM through ordering a quart of soup. If you would rather support our soup fundraiser by preparing and donating soup, please call me so I can get your "specialty" on the order form.

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITY

Big Brothers Big Sisters Of the Bridge is busy serving Lycoming County. Their mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring professionally supported 1 to 1 relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. Their vision is that all children achieve success in life. They partner with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community and hold themselves accountable for each child in their program achieving:

- Higher aspirations
- Greater confidence
- Better relationships
- Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educational success

January is National Mentoring Month. Mentors are a force for change and every Big is just that ... a friend, role model, listener, resource and guide, instructor and member of a team. Big Brothers Big Sisters are people from our community who want to be a good role model for young children. If you'd like to learn more about being a Big, contact their office at www.Bbbsbepa.org #beabiglycoming. Like them on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bbbsnepa>, call 570-433-3193, email them at mentor@bbbsnepa.org or contact their Lycoming County office, 192 Reach Road, PO Box 271, Montoursville PA 17754.

Lasagna Dinner: Trinity Episcopal Church, 844 W. 4th St., Wmspt will have their dinner Wed, Jan. 23 from 4-6:30 pm. Adults: \$9.75, Children \$5.50 (12 and younger), Slab \$7 Take out available. 570-322-0126.