



Ecumenical Encounters

A GRIEF SHARED

For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly... Psalm 138:6

By the Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson, Executive Director

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John died last week. In some ways his death was like any other death. A voice came over the phone saying, "John died while sitting in his chair." The news shocks, the mind wonders, "When was the last time I saw him." There are people to talk to, arrangements to be made. Grief to be shared.

My old grief counseling training kicks in. Five stages of grief, you have to let yourself walk through them. But there is something different about this. John had been homeless, chronically so, up until the last year. He had been making good progress, taking better care of himself, establishing a home.

Yes, a home. A home with a bed and a beautiful table and people who cared about him. When he was ready to move in, our Pathways HUD coordinator found him a table, one John felt was so beautiful he didn't deserve it. It was at that table, John died.

By the rivers of Babylon---there we sat down and there we wept

When we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our harps.

For there our captors asked us for songs.

And our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,

Sing us one of the songs of Zion!

How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

Psalm 137

Irony. So many of us think we are not worthy of beautiful things. So many people are held captive and tormented by their dashed hopes for life. How can they sing a song boasting of God's goodness when this world has treated them so cruelly? We humans need to experience joy so that we can give back joy.

We who know God can sing songs of joy. We must sing songs of joy when one of God's prodigals has turned toward home. Each day we must celebrate the small victories: getting an ID, having a hot meal, remaining sober, finding a job, making friends, sharing a cup of coffee and conversation.

We know you understand this. Every day we get letters that say a bake sale was held for Daybreak, a fashion show for the Soup Kitchen, gifts for the celebration of an anniversary are given to the LCCC mission. Women's groups keep us in their prayers and youth groups rock all night to feed hungry people. You get it, and that means so much to the John's of this world --- that people have not given up on them. You are the hands that take the hands of struggling people.

But we must not only touch one person at a time, we must look at systems that make life more of a struggle than it needs to be. We encourage you over the summer to contemplate as a congregation, community group, or individual, what area of need you want to educate yourself about, and set up that study group or buy that book or resource to read in the fall. Both the LCCC Justice and Advocacy Committee and the Interfaith in Action

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**LCCC
CALENDAR
OF EVENTS**

June 8
LCCC Sunday

Oct. 5
AIDS Walk

Oct. 12
CROP Walk

Oct. 15
TWC Luncheon

E.A.T. THIS SUMMER

JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM CONGREGATIONS JOIN FORCES

Encourage Interfaith Dialogue and Service

Last fall the Lehigh County Conference of Churches invited a broad base of interfaith community leaders to form the Interfaith in Action Committee (IAC). The IAC Mission Statement was adopted in February and the first program initiative "*Weigh in Against Hunger*" will kick off the last weekend of June with a community-wide food drive and interfaith dialogue.

Weigh in Against Hunger is a six-month action campaign encouraging our entire community to contribute 1/10 of their weight in food or cash to local emergency food pantries, soup kitchens or the Second Harvest Food Bank. Independence Day is the kickoff of the program because of the duty we have as Americans to help those in need. The summer is when contributions are usually the lowest and the needs increase. Children go hungry in the summer without the school nutrition programs that feed them during the school year. With the downturn in the economy, more families and individuals are turning to these programs for food assistance this year.

We are asking people to **E.A.T.**, to do three things:

- Educate yourselves and others about the hungry and hunger needs;
- Act: Collect and deliver food and other items to local emergency food pantries, soup kitchens or Second Harvest – you choose who and when ; and
- Tell about what you've done by reporting back to the Lehigh County Conference of Churches the weight of your donations and the dollar amounts.

We will report out the running tally of collections. The program will culminate on Thanksgiving when we offer thanks for being able to join together to "*Weigh in Against Hunger*".

The Interfaith in Action Committee will also be writing columns in *The Morning Call* to further our goals. Interfaith dialogue will be an ongoing component of the programs as well.

Resources will soon be mailed to congregations and on the LCCC website. For more information, contact the Lehigh County Conference of Churches at 610-433-6421 or lccc@lccconfchurch.org.

HAPPY ENDINGS A PATHWAYS STORY

Once in a while, everything just seems to come together. This was one of those times...

Recently Sharon Mullay, a Pathways housing case manager, was asked to see a pastor who had a 69 year old lady with him. Upon meeting them, Sharon quickly realized that Emma was in a very critical state. She was staying in a less than desirable motel, alone, except for two cats.

Sharon learned that Emma and her sister had been evicted from her sister's home the week before. Her sister's husband had died not long before and Emma went to live with her sister to help pay rent and expenses. However, they couldn't make ends meet because they were both living on Emma's \$597 social security check. Emma's sister had never worked.

Emma and her sister looked in the phone book, found a motel that they thought they could afford, and paid a cab \$30 to take them to what turned out to be a rat-infested hovel. Emma told



Sharon that the holes in the walls were so large that her cat went in and was gone for three days before they could get her out.

The day before the pastor brought Emma to Pathways, Emma's sister unexpectedly died of congestive heart failure. Sharon could see that Emma was deeply grieving. She had \$60 to her name, was all alone with her cat as well as her sister's.

Emma seemed weak and unable to understand what to do next. She just knew she couldn't go on in that terrible place and she was adamant that she had to have her two cats. Sharon knew she had to work fast to get Emma a clean, safe and affordable place to live.

All the shelters were full. Sharon told the pastor she would contact other agencies, try some other avenues, but this was one case that definitely needed God's intervention and some heavy duty prayer. It was agreed that Sharon would call Emma's pastor the next day. Sharon prayed. She's certain that the pastor did too.

The next morning, Sharon called Valley Housing. Knowing that Emma only had \$597 and the cheapest one bedroom apartment, if available, would be \$520, Sharon pleaded Emma's case.

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Justice and Advocacy

DESPERATELY SEEKING A HOME: DISPLACED PEOPLE IN THE U.S.

When a foreigner lives with you in your land, don't take advantage of him. Treat the foreigner the same as a native. Love him like one of your own. Remember that you were once foreigners in Egypt. I am GOD, your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34

Consider the verse above the next time you hear an argument favoring the position that immigrants are a burden to the U.S. The following statistics emphasize the need for just immigration reform initiatives:



In 2007 approximately 30,000 people were kept daily in detention by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE detained a total of 320,000 people in fiscal year 2007.

It costs about \$100 per day per person to hold them in custody totaling \$1.2 billion. This prevents immigrant family members from working and is an exorbitant cost to the community.

Immigrants are often detained without notice or warning, making some people groups highly vulnerable. (*Children, asylum seekers, torture survivors, victims of human trafficking*)

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) reported that families detained in Leesport, PA live in jail-like conditions. Up to several hundred families can be held at any given time. These families often consist of pregnant women and children. More than 60 people have died in detention facilities throughout the country. Compassionate Christians can advocate for better treatment of our foreign-born sisters and brothers by reminding legislators that immigrants are children of God and asking that they be treated with respect and dignity.

HEALTH CARE REFORM WORKSHOP SLATED FOR SEPTEMBER 27, 2008

Did you know:

- **That the U.S. is the only wealthy, industrialized country without universal health care?**
- **That the U.S. spends more per capita on health care than any other country in the world?**
- **That nearly 50 million Americans are without health insurance?**

The J&A Committee will be hosting a fall workshop focusing on the plight of health care in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and nationally. The workshop will highlight the reality of the lack of affordable health care for people living on the fringes and the working class. This is an issue that affects the lives of so many citizens in our local community.

J&A will be calling on local congregations and community partners to work with them to help them advocate on behalf of people who are living without medical insurance. The goal is to help congregations in both the inner city and the suburbs understand the problem so that they will be able to vigorously advocate for just solutions.

Watch this space for more information on the fall J&A health care workshop.



2008 ANNUAL MEETING IN REVIEW

On May 20th, over 110 representatives of the LCCC's member churches, staff of the LCCC, and friends and community partners met at First Presbyterian Church in Allentown to discuss the year in review and look forward to the coming year.

Growth in Need:

LCCC Executive Director Rev. Christine Nelson discussed the growth of the LCCC over the years, driven by growth in the number of people in need, as well as the LCCC's plans to continue to meet emerging needs in our community going forward.

Keynote Speaker Susan Gilmore,

President/CEO of the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, described the United Way's new, three-year funding mechanism in a talk entitled "Impacting the Valley Through Community Goals."

Campaign Thank You Hymn

To the tune of "Joyful, Joyful." Thanks to Gale Siess, Eunice Schermerhorn, Rev. Debra Hepburn, and the Ready For Prime Time Singers. See libretto at right.

Human Budget Presentation:

Program Directors and Coordinators, as well as Daybreak's Crochet Queen DeeDee, talked about how the LCCC affects the lives of the people in need that the LCCC serves.

2008 Ecumenical Service Awards

See related article page 3.

Conference Business:

- The minutes of the 2007 meeting were approved.
- The LCCC's budget of \$1.776 million was approved.
- Mary Ann Gibbons, Bruce Keller, Pastor Steve Lozada, Rev. Charles Olmeda, and Renee Saleh were voted to their first term on the LCCC Board of Directors.
- Rev. Bill Ragan, Msgr. Joe Sobiesiak, and Rev. Tom Thomas were elected to their second terms on the Board.
- The current Officers of the Board were re-elected:

President Rev. Tom Thomas
Vice President Richard Focht, Esq.
Secretary Eunice Schermerhorn
Treasurer Theresa Racek, CPA

TOGETHER WE WILL CAMPAIGN THANK YOU HYMN

To the Tune of
'Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee'

Thank you, thank you gen'rous donors to our Ca-
pi -tal Campaign,

Hearts are filled with gratitude when viewing all
your gifts have gained.

Chorus

Larger spaces, improved equipment, more staff
po-si-tions help us serve

Homeless, hungry, at risk people with the pro-
grams they deserve.

Thank you for the new space housing Linkage
and Home-less Support,

E- cu- men- ism grows there, now, and at risk
kids find much comfort.

Repeat Chorus

Thank you for the increased pay a- llowing staff
to work their best,

Phones now work, computers function, kitchens
now can pass the test.

Repeat Chorus

Thank you for the filled prescriptions poor, ill
folks can-not afford,

Beau-ti-fy-ing Daybreak's entrance bet-ter wel-
comes all aboard.

Repeat Chorus



2008 ANNUAL MEETING IN REVIEW

(cont.)

2008 ECUMENICAL SERVICE AWARDS

Recognizing Our Partners Promoting Christian Unity

The LCCC is pleased to announce the award three 2008 Ecumenical Service Awards.

- Jessi Hight of Hope UCC, Allentown wins in the Youth category for her efforts to raise awareness regarding hunger issues in the community. This year she hosted "From Garbage to Gucci," a benefit fashion show at Emmaus High School. Her efforts raised around \$1000.00 for the LCCC Soup Kitchen.
- The Rev. George Yoder wins the Adult award for more than 40 years of ecumenical work in the City of Allentown. Rev. Yoder is an ordained UCC minister and has been involved with CUNA for 12 years. He was instrumental in the organization's formation and until recently served continuously on the Sponsoring Committee.
- The Group award is given to The Peace and Justice Team at Hope Church. Since 2005 they have worked diligently to help their congregation engage ecumenically and cross-culturally by participating in dialogues and worship events both within their local church and in the community

Congratulations to Jessi, Rev. Yoder, and the Hope UCC Peace and Justice Team. Your ministries are a witness to the power of faith made alive through intentional acts of mercy and justice.

THANKS TO OUTGOING LCCC BOARD MEMBERS FOR THEIR SERVICE

Heartfelt thanks go out to Heidi Mayville, Ray Murphy, Virgil Palmer, and Gwyn Parker for their years of faithful service on our Board which end on June 30. Their dedication has been a blessing to us and the people that we serve. We wish them well in their future endeavors.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE (cont.)

Committee will be offering suggestions of topics and resources through our newsletters and website. We would love to hear what tugs at your heart, what you learn, and what actions your study leads you to do.

WELCOME REV. CHARLES OLMEDA

To the LCCC Board

Pastor Charles Olmeda along with his wife Pastor Reina are the Senior Pastors of 3rd Day Worship Center in Allentown. What began as a word from the Lord to begin a predominantly Spanish church in Bethlehem has resulted in a relevant and anointed multi-ethnic ministry that is impacting the city, the region, and the nation, through the church, outreach programs, speak-

ing engagements and television ministry.

The ministry has birthed a daughter church in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, of which Pastor Charles remains as Overseer.



Pastor Charles serves as the National Immigration Coordinator and Northeast Overseer for the National Hispanic Christian

Leadership Conference; an organization serving approximately 15 million Latino Evangelicals on issues pertaining to family, immigration, economic mobility, education, political empowerment, and societal transformation. He is a member of the Mayor's prayer team and was recently appointed Chairman of the Board of the Allentown Mentoring Enrichment Network (A.M.E.N.), a community development program he helped design.

Pastor Charles is a credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God, has an extensive banking management background, continues to pursue his studies at DeSales University, and with Pastor Reina has two beautiful daughters, Amberly Elizabeth and Andrea Madison.



Conference Bulletin Board



A PATHWAYS STORY (cont.)

Karen, the office manager, immediately asked, "Can you bring her over?" Sharon was excited. She told Karen that she hadn't even opened a case file and knew that the necessary documentation wasn't in order yet. But Sharon saw an open door and she and Emma were going to walk through it.

Emma was interviewed. Documentation was faxed from many sources. Sharon opened Emma's case while sitting in Valley Housing's office. They were shown the apartment. Sharon asked about furniture. Valley Housing happened to have some leftover furniture from other apartments that was suitable. And there were large windowsills for the cats, to boot. All of this in one day.

Praise God.

As Sharon lay in bed that night, she wondered, "Who will move the furniture?" She called the pastor and asked for some manpower. They all met the next day. There were two men from his church, Emma, and the pastor. They moved in Emma's meager belongings, cats and all. Then the men moved the furniture Valley Housing was contributing from storage into Emma's apartment. They even took care of incidentals, such as food and toiletries.

In all Sharon's years as a housing case manager, she had never seen anything come together so quickly, in such a marvelous way. There was total cooperation from all sides. Emma was so thankful, and Sharon is as well, to Pastor Marty of Calvary Baptist Church, Karen of Valley Housing, and everyone who worked together to give Emma's story such a happy ending.

TOGETHER WE CAN BENEFIT LUNCHEON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15 NOON, ASBURY UMC

SPONSORSHIP AND RESERVATION INFORMATION COMING SOON TO A MAILBOX NEAR YOU!

This year **Together We Can** will focus on Daybreak and our new United Way WOW! grant, providing training for chronically unemployed men and women as they seek to re-enter the workforce—and paying them as they train and intern with local businesses.

Learn more about this important opportunity for your business to be a part of the solution.

Contact Ira Faro at 610-433-6421.

LCCC Needs

VOLUNTEERS

Pathways:

- Moving crew, preferably with a van or pickup, to move donated furniture into apartments secured for chronically homeless men and women

Daybreak:

- Help cook and serve meals Mon-Fri, breakfast, lunch and dinner

Soup Kitchen:

- Help cook and serve meals Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays

Aspires:

- Caring adults to mentor at-risk youth

DONATIONS

Pathways:

- Toiletries, such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste and brushes, deodorant, etc.
- Baby food jars and lids
- Furniture

Daybreak:

- Toiletries

Linkage:

- Socks and T-shirts
- C and D size batteries
- Bottled water
- Old cell phones with chargers
- Umbrellas or ponchos
- First-aid Kits
- New men's underwear
- Deodorant

For Pathways and Daybreak
Call 610-433-6421.

For Linkage and Aspires
Call 484-664-7320.

For Soup Kitchen
Call 484-664-2994

Community Bulletin Board

LAY REPRESENTATIVE TRAINING

THURSDAY, JUNE 26—10:00 am to NOON

All lay representatives are required to attend one training annually. This will enable you to help your church understand the ministry activities of the Conference and how you can get involved.

To register, call the Conference office at 610-433-6421 or email tvanderhall@lccconfchurch.org. Refreshments will be provided.

MARIAPOLIS 2008

**Focolare Movement
July 18 to July 22
University of Scranton**

“Discover Love As Harmony” is the theme for Mariapolis 2008. The program will include presentations and experiences on living the Spirituality of Unity in everyday life. There will be moments for prayer, recollection, sharing, games and outdoor activities. Children and teens will follow parallel activities. Nursery facilities for children ages 3 and under will be provided.

For information, email info@nymariapolis.org or visit www.nymariapolis.org.

FAITH AND FAST BALLS

**HACKMAN'S FAITH AND FAMILY NIGHTS
COCA-COLA PARK**

The Lehigh Valley IronPigs will host two Faith and Family Nights at Coca-Cola Park sponsored by Hackman's Bible Book Store.

Tuesday, June 17: IronPigs vs. Pawtucket Red Sox. Gates open at 6:05 PM. Game starts 7:05. There will be a Player Testimonial.

Sunday, July 20: IronPigs vs. Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees. Gates open at 4:35 PN. Game starts 5:35. Events to be determined.

Group rates available. Call the IronPigs at 610-841-7447.



**SUPPORT THE LCCC
SOUP KITCHEN**



**MATCHING GIFT
OPPORTUNITY**

**EVERY DONATION
DOUBLED!**

Rev. Gary Millspaugh, our good friend and partner at the Allentown Rescue Mission, has been blessed with a gift intended to support local emergency food pantries and soup kitchens. Enough money will be available to pay for hundreds of meals at our LCCC Soup Kitchen. But there's a catch. It's a Challenge Grant.

We need to raise NEW dollars. We can't use money that's already in hand or cash reserves.

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO
MEET THIS CHALLENGE!**

Send your donations to:

Lehigh County Conference of
Churches
534 Chew Street
Allentown, PA 18102

Write 'Soup Kitchen Challenge' on the memo line. Or visit:

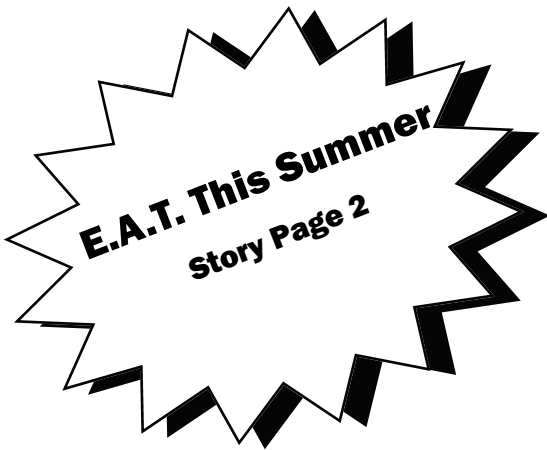
www.lccconfchurch.org

and click on 'Donate Now'.

Lehigh County Conference of Churches
534 Chew Street
Allentown, PA 18102

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*The Rev. Debra Hepburn,
Ecumenical Director*

*Carol Closson,
The Rev. William Seaman,
Executive Directors Emeritus*

United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley



Conference Tours

You are invited to take a tour of the LCCC ministries on the third Thursday of each month at 534 Chew Street, Allentown. Enjoy a free meal at the Daybreak drop-in center and consider how you may volunteer to do ministry with like-minded folk.

June 19, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

To register for the tour, please call the main office at 610-433-6421.

RSVP: One week prior to each event.



**TOGETHER WE CAN
OCTOBER 15**

**WHY SHOULD YOU SPONSOR?
FIND THE ANSWER: PAGE 6**



Lehigh County Conference
of Churches

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