



Ecumenical Encounters

BUILD WISELY

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

The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.
Proverbs 14:1



One morning on my way to work the traffic lights were out. What chaos ensued! With no boundary keepers people were unsure of what to do. Aggressive drivers created havoc and much “blue” language while overly cautious drivers tangled traffic with their indecision.

One might say our economy has been trying to work with its traffic lights out. Banks, businesses, government leaders were like aggressive drivers who wanted as little regulation as possible, seeking to maximize their gain with little regard for others. In the words of Proverbs, “the wise are cautious and turn away from evil, but the fool throws off restraint and is careless (14:16).” Unfortunately, as in traffic, everyone pays for mistakes made, some in terms of delays while others pay with their lives.

Where should we invest our dollars and, more importantly, our energies especially in difficult economic times? How do we wisely rebuild our national “house” since we have foolishly torn it down with our own hands?

As a society we seem to vacillate be-

tween “winner take all” and “we’re all in this together” approaches. In times of great national danger and need such as wars and depressions we band together to not only benefit all but to survive as a nation. In times of prosperity, a focus on individual abilities fueled by desire seems to rule. What is interesting to me is that both camps espouse their way as best in terms of “freedom.” My question is: freedom directed for what purpose?

Freedom can mean I am free to do anything I want or freedom can mean I choose to establish individual/national restrictions for my own benefit as well as others.

It is clear in the scriptures that people of faith can never think only of themselves and their freedom. This is true not only in their spiritual beliefs but in how they live their everyday individual and collective lives. Solomon, one of the great kings of Israel, repeats this theme through out Proverbs:

Those who despise their neighbors are sinners, but happy are those who are kind to the poor... Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are

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LCCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS	January 25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	February 1 Souper Bowl of Caring	March 21 Bread for the World
		Feb. 25—April 8 Lenten Services	March 26 Campbell Lectures

Build Wisely, Cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

kind to the needy honor him. (14:12, 31)

Yes, we know how to do this individually. We give food; we provide for shelter; we visit the sick. But how do we do it as a society? National policy will take many forms, but it is clear if we are attempting to integrate our faith with our actions, we must be willing as a nation to curb our individual gain in order to insure our neighbors' well being. We must be advocates for our neighbors that are struggling. We must address the root causes of poverty, bankruptcy, and depression. We must join together for the benefit of all.

I can't say exactly what that might mean for individual policies or laws, but I do posit a question that I believe should be constantly and consistently asked: **Will this action benefit my neighbor, especially my poor neighbor?** If it has no benefit beyond a singular individual, most likely it will not in the long run benefit the society as a whole. I invite you to join with other people of faith who are trying to think through these same questions: The LCCC Justice and Advocacy Network. Explore their thinking via our affiliate website at <http://ja.pprj.org> or call Rev. Debra Hepburn, our Ecumenical Director, at 484-664-7320. Let's build wisely.

St. Andrews Episcopal Church Joins LCCC

The LCCC welcomes St. Andrew's Episcopal Church into membership. A midsize congregation in east Allentown, St. Andrews joins to increase their mission endeavors in the community.

Father Scott Allen, St. Andrews' pastor, recently contacted LCCC to help with the development of a food pantry to help struggling families put food on the table and recently spoke at a racism workshop hosted by the LCCC Ecumenism Committee. Several parishioners are engaged in LCCC programs.

With the addition of St. Andrews, the Conference now consists of 144 congregations and is growing. Additional congregations are considering membership as a way of staying actively involved in ministry in Allentown and Lehigh County. When St. Andrews took the leap of faith to join the Conference, they formed a new partnership that will enable them to put their faith into action and help others reach their full potential.

Working for Unity in a Time of Disunity

Campbell Lectures

at

Moravian Theological Seminary

March 26, 2009, 4:00pm

The 2009 Robert K. Campbell Lectures on Christian Unity promises a treasure of theological and practical lessons for the Church.



This year's lecturer, The Rev. Dr. Ian Douglas, comes to us with an extensive academic career as Angus Dun Professor of Mission and World Christianity at the Episcopal Divinity School. Dr. Douglas was a member of the Design Group of the 2008 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops.

The LCCC's commitment to faith in action coupled with faith and order has spurred the interest of this scholar and challenged him in a unique way to offer the following lectures:

Lecture I: God's Mission and Difference in Ecumenical Perspective – to include a small group exploration on the nature of mission and how differences in the many identities each of us inhabit affect our faithfulness to the mission Dei.

Lecture II: Christian Unity and the Challenge of Single Identity Politics – examine how relationships across differences in service to the missio Dei can draw Christians together.

Registrations for the lectures and dinner will begin in late January. For more information call the LCCC main office at 610-433-6421 or email lccc@lcccconfchurch.org.

HELP!



- **Pathways needs Toiletries and disposable diapers**
- **Aspires needs Mentors**
- **Daybreak needs Volunteers to Cook and Food Donations**

Call the LCCC Main Office at
610-433-6421.

January is National Mentoring Month

During January President-elect Barack Obama will be sponsoring a series of public service announcements through which he encourages Americans to "Be the Change: Mentor a Child."

Every day in the ASPIRES program we get to see mentors being the change for the students in the program. Whether it is helping a student study for a test or teaching them to be better parents or just being a friend, mentors do make a difference.

To learn more about National Mentoring Month visit www.nationalmentoringmonth.org.

The ASPIRES program is always in need of caring adults to serve as mentors to the students. For more information about the ASPIRES program and how you can become a mentor please contact Missy Wise at 484-664-7320 x17 or mwise@lccconfchurch.org.

VIP Mentoring Completes First Session

Very Important Parents, a program for pregnant and parenting students, completed its first 7 week session on Dec 17th. There were 7 students and 7 mentors participating in this first session. The sessions included presentations from community agencies, parenting education as well as one-on-one mentoring.

Both the teens and mentors enjoyed the session and look forward to the next session which begins Feb 11, 2009.

"I think you are doing a great job with the program. I enjoy coming each week and feel the students are being very cooperative and open to learning new things and ways to do things with their children. So far for me the experience has been nothing but pleasant and I look forward to the next session."

Colleen Haycock VIP Mentor

If you are aware of any student who may benefit from the program or if you would like to become a mentor please contact Missy Wise at 484-664-7320 x17 or mwise@lccconfchurch.org

Child Care Providers Needed for Aspires Mentoring

Experienced Child Care providers are needed to provide child care during the Aspires Mentoring Very Important Parents program. There are 3 positions available and the job pays \$8-\$9 an hour. The program is held on Wednesdays from 5pm-8pm and lasts 21 weeks. The children range in age from 2 months to 5 years.

Qualified applicants need to be 18 years old or older, have previous child care experience, be certified in CPR/First Aid or have completed the Red Cross Babysitting class, pass a background and child abuse check and willing to commit for at least seven weeks. For more information, please contact Missy Wise at 484-664-7320 x17 or email: mwise@lccconfchurch.org

Dates needed are:

February 9, 18 25;
March 4, 11, 18, 25;
May 6, 13, 20, 27;
June 3, 10, 17.



Peace Pilgrimage Gets New Sponsor for 2009

Luke Martin of the Nazareth to Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage reports that the annual peace walk was a success. More than 150 people gathered to walk the 10 mile journey. Peace was in every step as folks walked together to declare that the good will of God can be found where peace abounds. Walking through small boroughs on Route 191 and through Bethlehem Township, the walkers stayed the course until they reached Christ Church in Bethlehem. There they rested and enjoyed a lite meal and an impassioned message from Janet Chisholm of Kirkridge Retreat Center.

Pilgrimage organizers contacted Baptist Peace Fellowship to co-sponsor next year's pilgrimage. A reply from BPF affirmed that they have agreed and will begin dialoguing with local peace walk organizers in early spring about the new partnership. The Nazareth to Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage is in its 49th year and continues to be a positive experience in the life of the community. The 2009 pilgrimage is scheduled for Saturday, December 12th. Mark you calendars.



35 million people in the U.S. are hungry or don't know where their next meal is coming from, and 13 million of them are children. If another country were doing this to our children, we'd be at war.

Jeff Bridges

The Lehigh County Conference Of Churches served over 64,000 meals in 2008 in our Soup Kitchen and Daybreak drop-in center. That's 30,000 more than were served in 2002. We couldn't have done it without your support.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

TODAY, THE NEED IS GREATER THAN EVER.

REGISTER FOR THE SOUPER BOWL OF CARING TODAY

 Fill out this registration form and mail to Lehigh County Conference of Churches,

534 Chew St. Allentown, PA 18102, fax the form to 610 439 8039, or

Call the Conference at 610 433 6421 For Information: www.lccconfchurch.org

Lehigh County Conference of Churches SOUPER BOWL 2009

Church/Organization _____

Contact _____

Address _____

State _____ **Zip code** _____ **Telephone** _____

Fax _____ **Email** _____

3rd Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

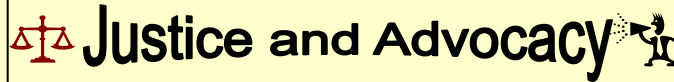
CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL

2227 Chew St., Allentown, PA

Friday, January 16th: Shabat Service featuring a sermon by Rabbi Israel Dresner, who first met Martin Luther King Jr. in a jail cell in Georgia in 1962.

Saturday, January 17th: An Evening with Rabbi Dresner featuring a light dinner, a presentation by Rabbi Dresner, and a Q&A. Limited seating. Admission for Saturday \$15, light dinner served.

Sunday, January 18th: Community Celebration. All events free of charge. For reservations please call 610.435.9074 or email jmurman@kiallentown.org



Justice and Advocacy



**Bread For The World and LCCC Hosts
Advocacy Workshop
“Hunger at Home: Food for our Neighbors”**

Saturday, March 21, 2009, 8:30a – 3p

**First Presbyterian Church,
3231 Tilghman St. Allentown**

The workshop will include:

- Breakout sessions on domestic hunger issues.
- An opportunity to dialogue with a member of Congress.
- Facts about U.S. foreign assistance and how to make it more effective in reducing poverty.
- Ways to advocate for a more efficient system that will ensure poor people get help faster and more effectively.
- Training in conducting an *Offering of Letters Campaign* in your local congregation.

Please RSVP by **March 19th**: For pre-registration or further information, contact Larry Hollar at: lhollar@bread.org or the LCCC office at 610-433-6421 or lccc@lccconfchurch.org

**Choirs Clash To Raise Money For Charity
Saturday, January 31st**

Pair acclaimed classical tenor Michael Bodnyk with Union Baptist Church's soulful gospel choir and you have **Faith! A “Clash” of the Valley Choirs**. PA Sinfonia, the LCCC, the City of Allentown, and the Allentown Symphony Association invite choirs to participate in a competition on January 31, 2009, (Snow Date is Feb. 22) at Allentown Symphony Hall. Modeled after a popular television series, this event is designed to bring diverse groups together to celebrate Black History Month and win money for their favorite charity. The day of the competition participants will:

Perform 3 anthems for a panel of judges

Attend a pre-concert reception announcing the winning choirs

Perform winning anthems with the PA Sinfonia under the direction of Dr. Allen Birney

Compete for an opportunity to win a monetary prize for their designated charity

Discounted tickets are available at individual and group rates. For more information/registration: www.pasinfonia.org or Catherine DeBoeser at PASinfonia@verizon.net or 610-434-7811.

**LCCC Launches New
Affiliate Web Site
Link Up for Justice at <http://ja.ppjr.org>**

LCCC Interfaith In Action Food Drive Ends With Tons of Donations

In spite of the recent economic upheaval, many people will counted their blessings this holiday season, largely due to the fact that congregations and organizations throughout our area participated in LCCC's Interfaith In Action food drive. In July the LCCC Interfaith in Action Committee challenged congregations and community organizations to educate themselves on hunger issues and donate to food programs. Groups like Neffs UCC, the Knights of Columbus and Muhlenberg College together donated over 3,518 lbs of perishable food items and \$511 in cash. Pastor Sharon Joseph of Church of the Manger weighed in that her congregation collected more food than they ever anticipated, almost 8000 lbs for Second Harvest.

Weigh In Against Hunger ended Thanksgiving Day and the total food and cash donated was 22.5 tons of food! We thank the 50 groups that donated food, money, and school supplies to help area feeding programs. Most importantly, thousands of people will not go hungry because this community cares! Holidays come and go but donations are still needed. In the days ahead many people will be able to give thanks for the food they are receiving because congregations and organizations *Weighed In Against Hunger*.



Conference Bulletin Board



SOUP KITCHEN CHRISTMAS

We thank our many friends who gave up a portion of their holiday to help in making Christmas Day a bit brighter for 300 of our neighbors in need, including 50 children, at the LCCC Soup Kitchen.



Santa was assisted by 50 volunteer elves while Elf-In-Chief Charles Brannon, Soup Kitchen Coordinator, kept everyone smiling.



THANKS AS WELL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY HOSPITAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Once again, our friends at LVH IT donated the fruits of their Christmas tree decorating contest to families who might otherwise not have been able to afford their own tree. The LCCC's Marge and Ben oversaw distribution to delighted families



Lenten Concert Series Features Diverse Cast of Performers Starting Noon, Feb. 25th

The LCCC will host a Lenten concert series entitled "Lift Every Voice in Changing Economic Seasons." Each concert will feature area vocalists and musicians highlighting the music of 20th Century African-American composers.

- Concerts will be held each Wednesday beginning Feb. 25 through April 8, 12:00 noon, Zion's Reformed UCC, 620 W. Hamilton St., Allentown.
- Among the singers are Rev. Debra Hepburn, LCCC Ecumenical Director; Karen Coca of the Bach Choir; The Emmanuel Singers of Christ Lutheran Church; Bernice Green, a local gospel artist; The BVM Choir of Northampton; Muhlenberg College Gospel Choir; and a host of accompanists.
- LCCC Program Directors will speak on the theme about how their specific area of ministry impacts the lives of the people they serve.
- Lunch will be available and donations are appreciated. Everyone is welcome to attend.

2009 LCCC

Lay Representative Trainings

Training opportunities for lay representatives in LCCC member churches for the coming year have been scheduled.

March 12 2009, 10a-12p

June 11, 2009, 10a-12p

September 10, 2009, 10a-12p

December 10, 2009, 10a-12p

The purpose of these trainings is to help lay reps better understand their role and to explain the various ministries of the Conference. Trainings are offered quarterly and reps are required to attend one training per year. Sign up by contacting the LCCC main office at 610-433-6421 or Tanean Schaller at tschaller@lccconfchurch.org or 484-664-7320.

3rd Thursday Tours Scheduled for 2009

Conference tours are offered the 3rd Thursday of every month. Upcoming tour dates include:

January 15, February 19, March 19

11:30AM – 12:45 PM

LCCC Main Office, 534 Chew St, Allentown.

To attend call 610-433-6421 or contact Chris Durner at cdurner@lccconfchurch.org or 484-664-7320.

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

January 2009

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January, 2009

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*The Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson,
Executive Director*

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*Tom Smith,
Operations Director*

*Tom Walker,
Human Services Director*

*The Rev. Debra Hepburn,
Ecumenical Director*

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



JORDAN UCC COOKS FOR THE CONFERENCE

PORK & SAUERKRAUT DINNER

Rt. 309 & Walbert Ave., Allentown

Friday, February, 13, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM.

Advance Tickets \$8. Tickets at the Door \$9.

Children (age 5-10) \$3. Children (age 4 and under) Free.

Tickets for the dinner may be purchased in the Jordan UCC church of-
fice, 610-395-2218, or by contacting Pat Markle, 610-262-7464, or
Janice Stephens, 610-437-0809.

Your can Cook for the Conference too.

It's simple and it's easy. Hold a bake sale, a breakfast, or a
spaghetti dinner between now and April. You decide when.
We'll promote your event just like we're promoting Jordan's.

Call Development Director Ira Faro at 610-433-6421
for information on how you can help the LCCC serve over 60,000 meals
to our hungry neighbors this year.

Lehigh County Conference
of Churches

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