



# Ecumenical Encounters

## CHANNELING ONIONS

***The one who holds unto what you were given to give will reap less, and the one who gives what you were given to give will reap more...***

**2 Corinthians 9:6**

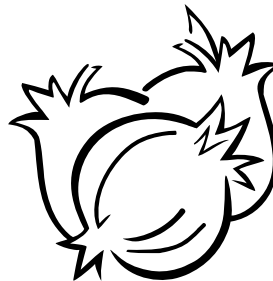
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There was an old peasant woman, very wicked, who died without leaving a single good deed behind. All she did, she did for herself alone, illicitly taking what she could take and acquiring by legitimate means what she could acquire, but not giving anything to anyone, nothing useful or beautiful, no helpful deeds, not even a kind look. After she died the devil seized her and plunged her into the lake of fire.

*So her guardian angel stood and wondered what good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God; "She once pulled up an onion in her garden," said he, "and gave it to a beggar woman." And God answered: "You take the onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold and be pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is." The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her. "Come," said he, "catch hold and I'll pull you out."*

*He began cautiously pulling her out. He had just pulled her right out, when the other sinners in the lake seeing how she was being drawn out, began catching hold of her so as to be pulled out with her. But she was a very*

*wicked woman and she began kicking them. "I'm to be pulled out, not you. It's my onion, not yours." As soon as she said that, the onion broke. And the woman fell into the lake and she is burning there to this day. So the angel wept and went away.*



Miroslav Volf opens his book, Free of Charge: Giving & Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace, with this story from The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. He does so to make a point often missed in our self-fixated world. We are saved by God's generosity, not our own. And we are saved to become channels of God's grace to others.

The ancient Greek and Romans imagined a circle of giving, a dance of 3 sisters called the Three Graces: one bestows gifts, another receives them, and the third returns them. As Christians we believe the gifts of God flow into us, and flow on from us. Like a stream bed that receives water, we are both constituted and changed by the gifts.

But just as the water was never the streambeds' to begin with nor its to hold forever, humans channel God's gifts from one to another and ultimately back to the giver—God.

**Continued on page 2**

**VISIT  
LEHIGH-  
CHURCHES.ORG**

**DONATE NOW THROUGH Network for Good**

  
**CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS**



**September 26**  
Homeless Seminar:  
Voices of Hope  
8:30 am—3:00 pm  
St. John's UCC,  
Allentown

**October 4**  
FACT AIDSWALK  
Rose Garden,  
Bethlehem PA  
11:00 AM

**October 11**  
CROP Hunger  
Walk, 1:00 pm, St.  
Timothy's  
Lutheran Church

**October 14**  
Together We  
Can, Annual Fund-  
raiser, 5:30 pm  
Asbury United  
Methodist Church

**Continued from page 1**

How can we better develop the ability to give, especially in this time of increasing need? It won't happen by trying to plunge people into lakes of fiery hell. Some may be drawn to stories of need, imagining they or their loved ones in similar straits.

The best way to develop the ability to give is to invite God to change how we think about the onions we already have in our garden. We give because we recognize God has given to us overflowing, never ending grace.

Give what you were given to give and in faith believe it will return to you transformed by God into what you need for the next leg of your journey.

Channel onions, God's grace and let others hang on for the ride.

**Volunteer Spotlight – Aspires Mentoring**

Each year Aspires Mentoring counts on the talents and dedication of volunteers to make the program a success. As the coming school year begins, some mentors who were with us last year will be returning while others will be just beginning.

Colleen Haycock joined Aspires' Very Important Parent program for at-risk teens with children of their own last fall in hopes of helping them stay in school. Through the course of the year she connected with one of the students, a teen mom who is raising a son. They have developed a very special relationship. Her protégé has expressed how grateful she is to have an intelligent and professional woman like Colleen as a role model. It has helped the student set positive goals, seeing her future in a different way.

To Colleen we say thank you for the time, patience, understanding and compassion you exhibit through your work. You set a wonderful example for all students and mentors.

Learn how you can make a profound difference in the life of a teen struggling to succeed by offering just a couple of hours a week of your time. And it may surprise you that you will gain as much as you give. Call LCCC Volunteer Coordinator Abigail Goldfarb at 484-664-7320.

**TOGETHER WE CAN  
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER****AT-RISK YOUTH FOCUS**

Join with 250 church, business, and civic leaders, volunteers and friends on **Wednesday, October 14, 5:30 PM, at Asbury United Methodist Church**, for our annual **Together We Can** fundraiser.

**Aspires Mentor of the Year Awards**

"I needed a miracle. My mentor was my miracle."  
Aspires Protégé

How would it make you feel to make that much of a difference in the life of a young person? Learn how YOU can help by mentoring an at-risk youth for just a couple of hours a week. Hear from the makers of miracles and those whose lives they have touched during the Mentor of the Year Awards.

**Featured Speaker John Antinoro,  
Senior Investigator,  
Gang Intelligence Section of the New Jersey  
Department of Corrections**

"Suburban and rural communities in Pennsylvania are a few years behind where we are in New Jersey, but you're catching up fast. Where there are drugs, there are gangs. There's too much profit in it. And drugs are everywhere."

Mr. Antinoro is closely involved in gang identification and awareness training for law enforcement agencies as well as instructing parents, children, and young adults about gangs and their inherent dangers. His talk will center on how we can identify gang activity in our communities and what we can do to combat gang influence.

- \* Come for the fine food provided by our friends at CURA Hospitality.
- \* Come for the fun and fellowship facilitated by emcee Ken Matthews.
- \* Come to hear stories that will lift up your spirits.

**Together We Can** make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth in Lehigh County.

Sponsorships and Program Ads Available  
For information or to register contact  
Development Director Ira Faro at 610-433-6421  
ifaro@lehighchurches.org.

# 30th Anniversary CROP Hunger Walk



CROP Hunger Walk is a group of neighbors walking together to take a stand against world hunger. Neighbors throughout the entire country get together in the Spring and in the Fall to raise world hunger awareness. The walk consists of approximately 300 walkers, representing many churches, youth and community organizations.

This year the Allentown area enters its **30 year anniversary** of hosting a local CROP Hunger Walk on **October 11, 2009**. The starting point will be **St. Timothy's Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 140 Ott Street, Allentown PA.

Three quarters of the walk proceeds are distributed to the Church World Service to address world wide hunger needs. One quarter of those proceeds will be shared between the Lehigh Conference of Churches Soup Kitchen and Daybreak Programs and the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank.

This year there will be a 10K (6.2 miles) walk through Allentown with rest and beverage stops along the way. There will also be a Golden Mile Walk for golden agers, families with children, or anyone wanting a leisurely walk with their dogs.

There is still time to register and take part in eradicating hunger by giving and participating in this years CROP HUNGER WALK. For more information contact Thomas Smith at 610-433-6421 or email at [tsmith@lehighchurches.org](mailto:tsmith@lehighchurches.org).



## CROP HUNGER WALK 2009 Sign Up Form

Name of Congregation or Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan to pick up materials: Please check choice of location. Materials will be ready on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

\_\_\_\_\_ First Presbyterian Church

\_\_\_\_\_ Lehigh County Conference of Churches

*Thank you for your participation!*

**You still have time to signup:**  
Lehigh County Conference of Churches  
534 Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18102  
Fax: 610-439-8039 or [tsmith@lehighchurches.org](mailto:tsmith@lehighchurches.org)



**Lehigh County Conference of Churches:  
Justice and Advocacy Fall Gathering**

**Homelessness: Voices of Hope**

Saturday, September 26, 2009

8:30 am - 3:00 pm

At St. John's United Church of Christ  
36 S. Sixth Street, Allentown, PA

Congregations can and do help people struggling with homelessness. The LCCC's fall Justice and Advocacy's seminar will focus on homelessness and public policy. A variety of opportunities for our local congregations to engage in the work of homelessness prevention will be presented.

**9:15 am Keynote presentation: Paul Lucia, Moderator of Lehigh Presbytery; member of Presbyterian Committee on Self-Development of People**

Plenary panel discussion:

10:15 am **Who's Homeless in the Lehigh Valley**

Tom Walker, LCCC Human Services Director  
Jeff Held, formerly homeless person  
Nancy McCullar, Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley Executive Director

12:00—1:00 pm Lunch

1:00 pm **Responding to the Trauma of Homelessness: Children, Veterans, Jobs**

Rooster Valentini – Allentown School District Home & School Visitor  
Hope UCC Job Club  
Kay Clarey of Confront, Veterans Sanctuary, Program of Treatment Trends

Breakout Session:

11:25 am **Voices of Hope** - Newspaper published by and for Lehigh Valley person's who are or have been homeless

11:25 am **Measurable Community Progress Toward Ending Homelessness** - leaders from The Allentown Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Ten Years and the Bi-County Housing Summit—First Lady Lisa Pawlowski

2:00 pm **Homelessness, Networking and Public Policy - LCCC Justice & Advocacy Network**

2:00 pm **How You and Your Congregation Can Reach Out to Homeless Persons** - LCCC Homeless Supportive Services and Pathways Staff

Light breakfast and lunch will be provided: \$5 suggested donation/offering  
For more information: [info@lehighchurches.org](mailto:info@lehighchurches.org) or 610-433-6421 or <http://ja.pjpr.org>



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## Justice and Advocacy

The statement below does not necessarily reflect the view of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches or its constituencies. Its purpose is to promote discussion and civil interaction around an issue important to all.

### **Lehigh County Conference of Churches Justice and Advocacy Committee Healthcare Statement**

*“For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me water; I was a stranger and you invited me into your homes; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison, and you visited me.”*

Jesus makes clear that a standard for judging all peoples has to do with how the least are doing in that community (Matt. 25:31-46).

Every person has the right to adequate health care. Every person has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family. This right flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all persons who are made in the image of God. Quality health care for all is also the Christian responsibility in keeping with Christ’s threefold instruction to Peter, as the representative of the Church, that he should “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” and “feed my sheep.” (John 10:10b)

We recognize that the health care system in this country is broken, and has left millions of Americans without access to affordable, accountable health care.

God’s intention of health (shalom), for the earth and its people, and Jesus’ promise of abundant life (health, healing, and restoration to wholeness in body, mind, and spirit) are central dimensions of the faith we profess and the vocation to which we are called as Christians. It leads the list in the order of service through which we participate in God’s activity through the church’s life by healing and reconciling and binding up wounds, ministering to the poor and sick, the lonely, and the powerless, engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice, giving of itself and its substance to those who suffer, sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world.

Two-thirds of all uninsured persons are members of families who earn less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. This population is mostly represented by teens, young adults, newly separated couples, and recent immigrants. All these subpopulations contain a large number of homeless individuals. Failure to ensure access to quality healthcare for the 42.6 million currently uninsured can have a serious domino effect. Not only are entire families affected negatively, but also the entire nation is at risk in the event of an epidemic. By providing quality healthcare for the all, we are not just preserving the life of poor individuals; we are protecting the health of the entire nation.

Everyone in the U.S., regardless of age, sex, employment, healthcare status, pre-existing conditions, or national origin, has the right to healthcare that:

- \* is cost efficient and effective
- \* includes mental health and long term coverage
- \* promotes prevention
- \* eliminates disparities in availability to quality healthcare
- \* addresses special needs, rural and urban populations
- \* promotes quality of service and better health outcomes
- \* provides adequate numbers of qualified healthcare professionals
- \* provides adequate and timely payments to providers
- \* fosters a network of healthcare facilities and safety nets
- \* ensures continuity of coverage and care including transportability of insurance and no denial of coverage because of pre-existing conditions
- \* ensures choice of healthcare providers
- \* is easy to use and reduces paperwork and administrative costs

It is within the mission of the Church to support, advocate for, and assist in both the public and private implementation of adequate health care for all.



## Community Bulletin Board



### ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PEACE PILGRIMAGE CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

December 12, 2009 (Saturday)  
walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem, PA.

Recall the journey of Mary and Joseph.  
11:00 AM: Meet in Bethlehem; buses transport pilgrims  
to Nazareth Moravian Church on Center Square

Pilgrims may join at any point along the way.  
5:30 PM: Pilgrimage concludes at Christ United Church  
of Christ in Bethlehem

All may join for a light meal and rally

Evening speaker: The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.  
Pastor Emeritus of the Riverside Church and President of  
Healing of the Nations Foundation "Get on the Path and  
Stay on the Path"

For more information, see [www.peacewalk.org](http://www.peacewalk.org).

### FACT AIDSWALK

The Lehigh County Conference of Churches Daybreak drop-in center has been involved in the FACT AIDSWALK Lehigh Valley for the past several years. Daybreak serves men and women with mental illness, chemical dependencies, HIV/AIDS, and the neighborhood impoverished elderly. Daybreak receives a portion of AIDSWALK proceeds.

This years event will be on **October 4, 2009 at 11:00 AM**.  
The walk will start at the Bethlehem Rose Garden.  
Registration begins at 11:30 AM at the Park.

The opportunity to assist those with HIV/AIDS is essential because Pennsylvania ranks as the sixth highest state in the nation for HIV infection. Local experts estimate over 2,000 HIV-positive individuals receive healthcare in the Lehigh Valley. Please support your community by participating in this event. For more info visit <http://factlv.org/aidswalk/index.htm>.



### Second Annual Lehigh Valley Housing Summit

Thursday, September 24, 2009  
7:30 am—12:30 pm  
Holiday Inn Allentown

Sponsors:  
Lehigh County, Northampton County and  
CACLV

Register via CACLV, 610-691-5620

### BREAK MORNING BREAD WITH ELIAS CHACOUR THE ARCHBISHOP OF GALILEE

Benefit Breakfast and Public Presentation  
Saturday, September 26, 2009  
Breakfast at 9:00 a.m.  
Presentation at 10:15 a.m.

Hosted by the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown

For additional information, directions and details, please contact Laura Fleischer at First Presbyterian Church at 610-395-3781. [www.fpcallentown.org](http://www.fpcallentown.org)

#### Daybreak Needs:

- \* Coffee
- \* Cereal
- \* Juice
- \* Paper products
- \* Bingo prizes
- \* Groups to cook and serve a meal

**HELP!**



#### Pathways Needs:

- \* Soap
- \* Shampoo
- \* Toothpaste
- \* Toothbrushes
- \* Razors
- \* Diapers – sizes 4 & 5

**BE PREPARED**

Please consider this...we don't control when disasters strike. Your family may not be together. or It may be dark and your family is sleeping. or It may be while you are at work and children are in school, daycare, etc. Realistically, many of us believe that "it won't happen to me" and "it won't happen here." But we can learn from the experiences of individuals throughout our country who are still coping with disasters they thought "would never happen to me." By developing a family emergency plan in advance, you and your family are better prepared and equipped to respond appropriately. If separated, you will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance.

September is National Preparedness Month, a nationwide effort to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their community, homes, businesses and schools. Lehigh County Citizen Corps invites you to review the National Preparedness Month information at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or to contact Lehigh County Emergency Management at <http://ema.lehighcounty.org/> or 610-782-4600 for more information and to help your family create an emergency plan.

**A PROGRAM OF ALL-INCLUSIVE CARE FOR THE ELDERLY — PACE**

The everyday LIFE Day Health Center offers one convenient location where members can go to receive preventive and restorative health care, meals, recreation and monitoring. The everyday LIFE team works cooperatively members and their caregivers to formulate the optimal plan for maintaining the elder in the community for as long as possible.

For info contact Molly Sanderson, LSW at 610-954-5433  
[www.everydaylifecenters.org](http://www.everydaylifecenters.org)

**Medicare Informational Breakfast**

A Medicare Informational Breakfast will be held on Tuesday, September 22nd at the Holiday Inn in downtown Allentown (904 West Hamilton Street) The breakfast will begin at 10:00 AM.

Representatives of Health America Advantra will be available for current Medicare or soon to be Medicare recipients to answer Medicare related questions.

Interested persons should respond by September 17th to Ms. Toni Zehring at 1-866-497-2472 ext. 2517 or contact Thomas Smith, Lehigh County Conference of Churches' Operational Director at 610-433-6421.

**PA Career Link  
Lehigh Valley Job Fair 2009**

In response to a need expressed by many greater Lehigh Valley employers, the partners of PA Career Link Lehigh Valley, in coordination with the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc., Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Society for Human Resource Management, and The Morning Call, are hosting PA Career Link Lehigh Valley Job Fair 2009.

**Date:** Wednesday, September 23  
**Hours:** 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM  
**Location:** Agri-Plex at Fairgrounds  
Agricultural Hall  
17th & Chew Streets  
Allentown, PA 18104

**LIVING WITH LOSS SUPPORT  
GROUP**

*When someone we love dies, we often feel overwhelmed, frightened and lonely. Sharing our thoughts and feelings with others who have experienced a loss can alleviate our sense of aloneness and can give us needed encouragement.*

On Monday evenings, September 14 to October 19, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, a six-week grief support group will meet at Lehigh County Senior Citizens, Inc., 1633 Elm St., Allentown, PA. Led by a counseling professional, the group will share experiences and coping strategies. The group, which is sponsored by Stephens Funeral Home, is free but advanced registration is required. For more information or to register, please call Diakon Family Life Services at 1-888-499-2699 (toll free).

**Dialogue Iftar**

The Lehigh Dialogue Center will be hosting a free dinner to celebrate the breaking of the Ramadan fast. RSVP by Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup> via [www.lehighdialogue.org](http://www.lehighdialogue.org).

**Date:** Thursday, September 10  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Cost:** Free  
**Place:** Holiday Inn Hotel  
7736 Adrienne DR  
Allentown, PA 18031

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

September 2009

Non-Profit Organization

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Allentown, PA

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Ecumenical Encounters**

**September 2009**

Published by the Lehigh County  
Conference of Churches

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

*Ira Faro,  
Development Senior Director*

*Tom Smith,  
Operations Director*

*Tom Walker,  
Human Services Director*

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

**SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER EVENTS**

**JUSTICE & ADVOCACY FALL GATHERING  
HOMELESSNESS: VOICES OF HOPE**

September 26

8:30 am—3:00 pm

St. John's UCC, 36 S 6th Street, Allentown

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**CROP HUNGER WALK**

October 11

12:45 PM—Registration

1:00PM St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, 140 S Ott St, Allentown

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**TOGETHER WE CAN**

October 14

5:30 PM

Asbury United Methodist Church  
1533 Springhouse Rd, Allentown PA

United Way of the  
Greater Lehigh Valley



**Lehigh County Conference of Churches**

Email: [info@lehighchurches.org](mailto:info@lehighchurches.org)

Telephone: 610-433-6421

Fax: 610-439-8039

[www.lehighchurches.org](http://www.lehighchurches.org)