



Lehigh County Conference of Churches

Ecumenical Encounters

Volume 24 Number 1

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 2010

THE YEAR THAT WAS....THE YEAR THAT IS TO BE

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

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The New Year is the time we reflect on what has been in order to determine a focus on what is yet to be. "The Preacher" from Ecclesiastes reminds us that for everything there is a season, so please travel with me as I remember significant focal points in 2009.

It was a year of expansions. The Conference of Churches has helped people with no housing or about to lose it, find a home. With the help of the City of Allentown and the County of Lehigh the volume of rental dollars we have available has now doubled. Our mentoring program linking kids at risk with a caring adult now has two full time staff, likewise creating the capacity to double the number of youth who have a friend on whom they can rely.

It was a year of consolidation. We have always guessed that the number of volunteers who bless us is about 800, but we had no time to really count or articulate their full benefit to us and the community. Our Volunteer Coordinator now tells us in a typical month over 1000 people contribute 1,000 hours worth nearly \$20,000/month or \$240,000 per year. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

It was a year of fulfillment. The gap in our continuum of care for people in need of the basics of life was a way to help people find jobs. PEP (Permanent Employment Program) enables people to retool, retrain, reinvigorate their hope and search for work.

It was a year of amalgamation as our

Christian partner churches and organizations joined hands and hearts with our friends from other faiths via the LCCC Interfaith in Action to dialogue and act to raise 22.5 tons of food to feed our hungry neighbors.

It was a year of significant anniversaries: 50th Peace Pilgrimage, 30th Cropwalk and my 10th anniversary as Executive Director.

Themes which keep coming up lead us into 2010: health care, volunteer service days, greening, poor economy, and few jobs available. The volume of people who call, write, and flag our staff down on the street to ask how they can help is ever growing. Unfortunately, the number of people who struggle to hold on in this recession likewise keeps expanding. Though we sometimes tire, we believe God will provide and the Conference will continue to be one of the major conduits to connect people with resources.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is sometimes viewed as expressing the futility of life. I think rather it is God's way of reminding us that those who persist in hard times are the assurance we have that what we hope for must surely someday be. Whatever small thing we do for another affects my own life also and the life of the world.

So as this New Year begins I challenge each of us to hold on to the wisdom encapsulated in the Hindus saying: *Help thy brother's boat across, and lo! Thine own has reached the shore.*

Calling All Youth to Unite & Sing

at

LCCC Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service



Sunday, January 31, 2010 at 3pm
St. John's UCC
139 North 4th Street, Emmaus

We are seeking youth in grades 5-12 and college age to participate in an ecumenical youth choir. If you know young people who love to sing and enjoy meeting other Christian youth they are welcome to join and practice with the choir.

- Copies of the lyrics are available for pick up at the Conference office at 534 Chew St., Allentown.
- **Rehearsals are on Sundays at St. John's UCC, Emmaus**
January 10th, 6pm-7:30pm, January 17th, 3pm-4:30pm,
January 24th, 6pm-7:30pm, January 31st, 2pm-2:45pm
- To participate or for more information contact Rick Focht at 610-706-0686.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY SERVICE JANUARY 31, 2010

Contact _____ Phone # _____
 Church/School _____ Email _____
 Address _____
 Number of Youth: Grade 6-8 _____ Grade 9-12 _____ College _____
 Contact info if different from above _____

Return this sheet to Conference of Churches, 534 Chew St., Allentown, PA 18102 or fax to 610-439-8039 or email events@lehighchurches.org by January 11, 2010.

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

invites you to worship with us at

2010 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service Theme: *You Are Witnesses of These Things*

Sunday, January 31, 2010, 3:00 pm
St. John's UCC
139 North 4th Street, Emmaus PA



The worship service will feature:

- The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and Assemblies of God ordained minister, preacher.
- Rev. Rodriguez is a leading Hispanic Christian voice on Comprehensive Immigration Reform and board member of the National Association of Evangelicals.
- An inspirational and diverse youth choir will share selections of traditional and contemporary hymns.
- Fellowship hour following the service. Come meet and greet Christians from different denominations and churches in the community.

For more information contact:

Lehigh County Conference of Churches
Tel: 610-433-6421 - events@lehighchurches.org www.lehighchurches.org.

**KICK-OFF TO BLACK HISTORY MONTH
FEBRUARY 2010**

For Choir
Registrations & Tickets
Phone: 610.434.7811
Tickets: Youth \$5 Adult \$10

www.PASinfonia.org

FAITH!
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!
A "Clash" of the Valley Choirs

FEATURING
Local Gospel Choirs & Music of African American Composers
Greater Shiloh Music Ministry
Philadelphia Brass and
Members of the PA Sinfonia Orchestra
Vivian Wang, Pianist

SPECIAL APPEARANCES BY
Echoes of the Liberia Dance Troupe
Ian S. Holmes II
The Holmes Family
& CMS Vocal Ensemble

**Allentown
Symphony Hall** 
North 6th & Linden Streets, Allentown PA
Saturday, January 30, 2010 - 7:30 PM
(Snow Date January 31, 2010)

THIS EVENT IS MADE POSSIBLE
BY A GRANT FROM
THE RIDER-POOL FOUNDATION.

HOSTED BY A PARTNERSHIP OF
Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra
Allentown Symphony Association
Community Music School, Lehigh Valley
Lehigh County Conference of Churches
City of Allentown, Mayor's Office (Faith-Based Initiatives)

 **WDIV 88.1**
LEHIGH VALLEY
COMMUNITY PUBLIC RADIO
93.7 FM WEST 93.7 FM EAST

 **PENNSYLVANIA
SINFONIA ORCHESTRA**

Poster by PATADIGITAL DESIGNS www.patadigitaldesigns.com

HUNGER AT HOME: FOOD FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

**Lehigh County Conference of Churches Hunger Justice & Advocacy
Bread for the World - 2010 Offering of Letters Workshop**

**Saturday, March 27, 2010
8:30 am - 3:00 pm
At First Presbyterian Church
(Tilghman St. at Cedar Crest Blvd.)
Allentown, PA 18104**



Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, Executive Director of Common Cause

Focus: local and national food and hunger issues and tools for advocacy with our elected members of Congress.

Continental breakfast and lunch are included. *Donation \$10/adult; \$5/student*

Contact the LCCC office at 610-433-6421 or events@lehighchurches.org; or Larry Hollar lhollar@bread.org. More details at <http://ja.pppjr.org>

**WELCOME,
NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS**



Dr. Ed Miller

Ed is retired from Air Products where he was a Senior Engineering Associate. He has been a member of the Aspires Support Committee for 8 years. In retirement, Ed and his wife Anne have been active in refugee resettlement in the Lehigh Valley. He is a member of Bethany United Methodist Church in Wescosville. Ed enjoys golfing and birding. Ed and Anne have two grown daughters and they reside in Wescosville.



Rev. Tony Sundermeier

Tony is married to Katie, who is also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). They have been married for almost ten years and have two children; Jonathan (7) and Luke (20 mos.). Tony enjoys travel, golf, reading, cooking, playing and coaching basketball, the Phillies, the Eagles, and playing Star Wars and Batman with his boys. Tony has served churches in Wayne, PA; Bonn, Germany; and West Chester, PA; and is currently serving as the Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown.

Tony, who grew up in the Mayfair section of Philadelphia, received his undergraduate degree from Eastern College ('97 B.A. Theology) and his graduate degree from Princeton Theological Seminary ('03 M.Div.). He is currently half-way through his Doctor of Ministry degree in Leadership Formation at Biblical Seminary in Hatfield, PA.

**COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS
BRINGS BLESSINGS TO OTHERS**

By Volunteer Coordinator Abby Goldfarb

This year, a woman named "Jane" decided she would do something different for the holiday season. She decided to adopt a family from our Pathways Program and with her sister and her niece set out to make Christmas one to remember for a family of six. I spoke with Jane many times, guiding her on what the family needed and what the children would like. A few days before Christmas she arrived at the Conference of Churches with her car filled to the roof. Beautifully wrapped gifts, baked goods, baskets, holiday decorations – it went on and on! And when I commented that it looked like she had really enjoyed herself while doing God's work, she began to cry.

I learned that Jane, as well as her sister, were widowed. Jane also shared that her niece had experienced a very tough year. They had embraced this experience as a way to come together as a family and to feel again the true meaning of Christmas. They counted their blessings in the many hours they spent shopping and wrapping and baking, and were grateful for the opportunities given to them. And in this one charitable act, the lives of two families were touched in an unforgettable way.

There are so many good deeds to be done and many wonderful blessings to experience as we volunteer. Ask for Abby at 610-439-8653 to get involved!



**LEHIGH COUNTY
PRESCRIPTION CARDS
NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE**

The Lehigh County prescription discount card is now available online.

<http://www.rxprintacard.biz/naco/default.aspx>

Check out the website listed below to learn more about the prescription discount card.

<http://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/HumanServices/AgingandAdultServices/PrescriptionDiscountCard/tabid/655/Default.aspx>
<<www.lehighcounty.org.url>>

**HOMELESS SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
1ST CLIENT CHRISTMAS PARTY**



Imagine being homeless anytime, but especially imagine living outdoors at Christmas and having no one with whom to celebrate. Through the generosity of many, homeless and formerly homeless clients of LCCC's Homeless Supportive Services program gathered for a festive time of food and gift sharing.

It was quite an ambitious undertaking for our first attempt, but we managed to have turkey, dressing, pumpkin pie: the works. Every one got to open a gift, some people for the first time in many years. For some people this will be their first Christmas in their own apartment after being homeless for many years.

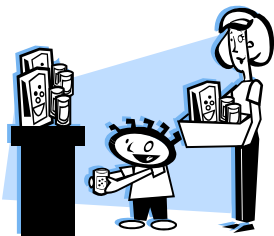
The entire H.S.S. support committee was very helpful with coordinating this event but we want to say a special thanks to Barbara Stader for cooking and cleaning tirelessly all day, to Rev. Maria Tjeltveit for donating decorations and to Rev. Richard Baumann for donating stocking stuffers as well as for use of the soup kitchen. We also want to thank Air Products for donating individualized gifts to each client.



Everyone came together to make this party a very special occasion and successful event.

HSS NEEDS:

- Hygiene products
- Cleaning Supplies
- Apartment items (e.g. toasters, etc.)



**I GUESS YOU COULD CALL ME SPIRITUAL,
BUT NOT RELIGIOUS**

How often have we heard this sentiment from people who care deeply about meaning and morals, but see little connection between organized religion and spiritual practice? At the same time, how many Christians seek to be in friendly and honest conversation with followers of other spiritual paths? What does all this portend for the future of the church?

In the Campbell Lectures on Christian Unity, Dr. John Crossin, Executive Director of the Washington Theological Consortium and author of *Everyday Virtues* will discuss these issues, helping us to discern a spirituality for the present day that will be both a foundation for our search for Christian Unity and deeply humane.

**LCCC Campbell Lecture 2010:
JOHN WILLIAM CROSSIN, OSFS**

“Spiritual and Religious:
Human Spirit and Holy Spirit in the 21st Century”

March 25 2:30 to 8:30 PM

At DeSales University

Register via: LCCC: events@lehighchurches.org,
610-433-6421, www.lehighchurches.org

WELCOME NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Nadine Patterson is our new Housing Case Manager for the Pathways program. Nadine is married with five children between the ages of 13 and 24 years and has three beautiful grandchildren. She is a court appointed special advocate for children in Lehigh County, a mentor for teens, and has been a Foster Parent for the past 12 years. Having volunteered with the Pathways program over the past year, she comes with a wealth of experience and familiarity to the Conference.

Jennifer Hocking is the new Aspires Program Assistant. Jennifer is a recent graduate of DeSales University with a degree in Elementary Education and a Sunday school teacher at Richmond United Methodist Church. She has a passion for at-risk youth and has been working in various at-risk programs for several years. Jennifer is very much looking forward to meeting the students in the Aspires program and building relationships with them and their families.

AN ASPIRES CHRISTMAS STORY



The ASPIRES Mentoring Program would like to thank all of those who connected with the true spirit of Christmas, and those who were able to reach out

with their hearts and donations to make someone else's Christmas very special. ASPIRES received many gifts and food from various companies, churches and individuals for the participating at-risk youth and their families throughout the holidays, for which they expressed their gratitude.

One teen mother, a participant in the Very Important Parents (VIP) program of ASPIRES, was "adopted" for the holidays, along with her toddler and his father. The family who offered to "adopt" them wanted to help a young struggling family and asked the teen mom to present them with a wish list with items they needed and wanted. The teen very hesitantly added things she felt were "big ticket" items such as a dryer, drawer-dressers, and a toddler bed, stating that she didn't think she should put those things on the list but the adopting family had insisted she write down everything she wished for. Much to her surprise, the adoptive family obtained everything on the list for them. The teen later expressed a heart-warming thank you to everyone involved through streaming tears.



While not everyone may be in a position to donate in this manner, ASPIRES would like to once again thank everyone who in any manner found a way to show someone the love and warmth in their hearts this Christmas.



DAYBREAK CELEBRATES ANGELS!

Daybreak client David receives a certificate of Merit during Christmas Angel Party.



Shirley shows off her gift bag!

Daybreak's Jose during our Shoe Give-away event.



This year Daybreak received the largest amount of Christmas gifts and donations I have seen thus far! I was amazed to see so much generosity. Daybreak had two Christmas parties once again. The Angel Party, which was held on December 16th for recognition of the Member volunteers and the all Member Daybreak Christmas party, held on December 18th, 2009. Both parties were a success. Thank you all for your continuous support.

JOIN US FOR A TOUR OF THE LEHIGH COUNTY OF CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

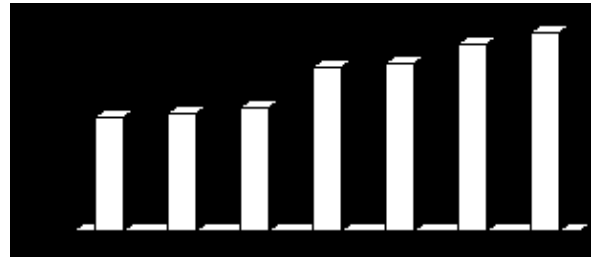
Upcoming tours:

January 21st, 2010

February 18th, 2010

March 18th, 2010

All tours are held at the Chew Street location at 11:30AM. Please call Abby Goldfarb, Volunteer Coordinator, to attend: 610-439-8653



More hungry neighbors come to the LCCC Soup kitchen year by year.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING REGISTER NOW

The Souper Bowl of Caring supports the Soup Kitchen and the Daybreak drop-in center, between them serving over 60,000 meals last year.

\$100 pays for one week's worth of meals at the Soup Kitchen, two at Daybreak.

*This year, Souper Bowl will take place on **February 7**. Bring meaning to the familiar words:*

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...

Follow these steps:

- Step 1. Sign up to collect donations at your church/organization during the month of January and on February 7th. Call us at 610-433-6421.
- Step 2. Challenge your congregation to donate to feed and shelter hungry people on Souper Bowl Sunday by passing soup pots/bowls to receive a special offering or holding a special Souper Luncheon to raise money. Creative ideas are welcome in the effort to raise awareness and act to help the hungry.
- Step 3. Call us if you have any questions: 610 433-6421
- Step 4. Mail/bring in money raised by February 22nd, 2010
- Step 5. Congratulations! And THANK YOU! You have helped to make life's road for the hungry and the homeless an easier one to travel.

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

January 2010

Non-Profit Organization

U. S. Postage Paid

Permit #1409

Allentown, PA

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Ecumenical Encounters

January 2010

Published by the Lehigh County
Conference of Churches

*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*

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY EVENTS

FAITH! A "CLASH" OF THE VALLEY CHOIRS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2010, 7:30 PM
ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY HALL
ALLENTOWN PA

**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
SERVICE**

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2010, 3:00 PM
ST. JOHN'S UCC
EMMAUS PA

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2010
CALL 610-433-6421 TO REGISTER

United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley



Lehigh County Conference of Churches

Email: info@lehighchurches.org

Telephone: 610-433-6421

Fax: 610-439-8039

www.lehighchurches.org