

# Ecumenical Encounters

## News from Lehigh County Conference of Churches

### THE WORK OF THE CHURCH: BE JESUS TO WHOMEVER YOU MEET

*For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature personhood.*

*Ephesians 4:12-13*

Why are we here? Yes I am asking that philosophical yet practical question. The LCCC Vision Statement says we strive to be the hands and feet of Jesus in today’s world. The main mission of the church cannot be better said than Paul’s words to the Ephesians quoted above. Our work of ministry is all about equipping one another. Like a guide prepares hikers, a coach trains a team, a foreman readies a construction crew, a pastor, a youth leader, an executive director, a Sunday School teacher get their troops ready to go out on the field of life and be Jesus to whomever they meet.

Christmas is the season I see the people of God most clearly doing their work of ministry. Every soup kitchen is overflowing with volunteers. Car load after car load of gifts are given for children and youth ministries. There are endless streams of carolers at nursing homes. And the joy and laughter of parties in drop-in and senior centers echo through the hearts of all involved long after the party has ended. We are happy to be on the road doing this work of ministry because we see it matters. There is a sense, almost a glow of unity, as we focus on sharing God’s love. And in that sharing we come to know God and our reason for existence at a more profound level.

I want to invite you to go even deeper throughout this year, run on down the field to catch the long ball. Gather up your prayer partners, your small group, your men or women’s ministries and take to the field again to be live witnesses to the world of what God has done for you and all the world.

The Conference of Churches this year is tackling some tough issues that have long separated believers one from another. Won’t you join us in learning together how to more fully be the body of Christ with one another and in the world?

- DREAM: with one of God’s finest visionaries: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday, January 15, 3:00 pm at Keneseth Israel
- LIVE CHRISTIAN UNITY: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service with Bishop John Barres preaching, January 29, 4:00 pm First Presbyterian, Allentown
- UNDO RACISM: Discuss how at Lenten Services & Discussions, 7 Wednesdays beginning February 22 at noon, Zion’s Reformed UCC & the BrewWorks, Allentown
- HAVE A GLOBAL VIEW OF THE FAITH: Campbell Lecture March 22 9:30 am – 3:00 pm at DeSales University, (Lamin Sanneh, Professor of Missions and World Christianity and Professor of History, Yale Divinity School)
- ADVOCATE FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE at Bread for the World Workshop, April 21, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, First Presbyterian, Allentown

Be Jesus to whomever you meet, connect in unity, grow in your faith!

The Rev. Dr. Chris Nelson

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## A Time of Praise and Prayer - Week of Prayer



The Gospel of Luke describes for us the response to the announcement of redemption: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest . . .!’ (Luke 2:13-14, ESV). Although angels had marveled at creation, they marveled even more when redemption was displayed through the birth of Jesus Christ. The angels have seen the creation process, but nothing bewildered the angels more than the incarnation of redemption through the birth of Jesus. This encounter with the news of redemption brought forth a song of the highest praise from the “multitude of the heavenly host.” In the same manner, when God’s people gather and are reminded of their redemption in Christ Jesus, they give the highest praise through songs, thanksgivings and prayers to the One who came to redeem people unto himself.

Thus, on January 29, 2012 at 4:00PM the body of Christ in the Lehigh Valley will gather at First Presbyterian of Allentown for a night of singing praises to their Redeemer, and for a time to ponder upon His Word, and for fellowship with one another. Bishop John Barres, a native of Bethlehem and the fourth bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, will deliver the homily that night in which we will be reminded of the victory that our Lord has already obtained for us.

The liturgy of this service will have a Polish influence as we celebrate together the “oplitki.” The worship of that night will be led by SWiM and the Ecumenical Youth Choir of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches. SWiM is a local praise band that for the past several years has led us to magnify the Lord through songs. They will lead us in songs that we will sing in English as well as Spanish. Truly, this night will be a foretaste of heaven. The youth choir will be directed by Rick Focht, a local lawyer and a LCCC Board Member. Please see the form on page five to sign up teens for this singing opportunity. For further details please call 610-433-6421. I am looking forward to greet you and worship God together!

Rev. Elliot H. Ramos, Ecumenical Director

### **Affordable Housing Opportunity**



Neighborhood Stabilization Program is the acquisition, rehabilitation and selling of affordable homes which were foreclosed upon in the Lehigh Valley Region. These homes are throughout the Valley and are being sold by the Lehigh Valley Community Land Trust (LVCLT) (which is a subsidiary of CACLV). Presently the Community Land Trust has 5 homes for sale (we have sold one) and they are beautiful inside and out. The concept is

that the Community Land Trust owns the land but the homeowner acquires the building which has been totally rehabbed. Each home includes all appliances.

In addition the Community Land Trust has enlisted the assistance of several housing agencies and local banks which are offering financing options to qualified buyers. In many cases it will be cheaper to buy one of these homes than rent.

Website: <http://lvclt.caclv.org/pages/menu/homes-for-sale/now-available.php>

### **2011 Contributions**

All checks dated 2011 received on or before January 13, 2012 will be credited to calendar 2011. Please take note if you wish your donation to be acknowledged as having been received in 2011. After January 13, your contribution will be acknowledged on the date received.

### **Volunteers Needed For Jobs Program**

The Lehigh County Conference of Churches Permanent Employment Program (PEP) helps people who have been chronically unemployed rebuild their skills and find jobs. Volunteers are needed to support the PEP program by teaching computer skills and resume writing, by conducting mock interviews, and by hiring PEP graduates. If you are interested in helping change a person’s life by simply being supportive, contact Dee Hakim at 610-433-6421 or [dhakim@lehighchurches.org](mailto:dhakim@lehighchurches.org). Flexible times can be set up.

**Bless This House– If it Exists  
Friends of the LCCC J&A Network**

On January 6 and 19, Western and Eastern Christians observe the feast of the Epiphany, the day the wise men arrived to visit the child Jesus. Water, chalk, gold fragments, incense, and myrrh are customarily blessed, and are then taken to hallow people’s homes. At Epiphany, we cannot forget that we celebrate the one who had no home to bless, born in a stable, who grew into an itinerant rabbi with no place to sleep. We cannot forget, at the same time, those who today have no place to live. In Pennsylvania, 40% of the population cannot afford to live, long-term, in a decent home. Vacant, dilapidated homes are increasing in number throughout our county. Whole families, most of whom have young children, suffer an array of chronic problems related to housing instability.

But we have the opportunity to help change that. Contact your elected representatives. Ask them, as they debate the current Marcellus Shale impact fee legislation, HB 1950, SB 1100, to make sure that housing assistance gets a prominent place in legislation. Christ had no safe shelter on this earth. Help us make sure that God’s people here in PA do.

Carl P. Rabbe, Ecumenical Intern

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

The St. John AME Zion Church  
Music Department  
Presents:

**Spirit Divine**

An Evening Concert of Negro Spirituals

When: February 4, 2012 4:37pm

Where: St. Peter’s Evan. Lutheran Church  
474 Vine St. (Corner of Packer Ave. & Vine St.)  
Bethlehem, PA 18015 (Southside)

Cost: Free will Offering at the door

For more information please call: 610-865-2888 or  
484-635-0918

“Let us celebrate our history through the art of  
Sacred Music.”

Rev. Gracher L. Selby.....Pastor  
Mr. Winston C. Alozie.....Minister of Music

**The ARAB Spring—Luncheon Discussion**

Muhlenberg College, Seegers Union, Room 111 & 112  
Prof. Ilan Peleg, Government & Law, Lafayette College  
Lunch-11:45am, Program-12:00-1:00pm  
February 3, 2012

**PreLent Workshop 2012: Matthew in Lent and Holy Week**

Dr. Aaron Gale, West Virginia University, editor of Matthew in the Jewish annotated New Testament and an expert on Matthew’s gospel, will lead us into the Year A texts of Matthew for Lent and Holy Week. What does Matthew teach us about Jesus’ Passion? What is the gospel’s understanding of Jesus’ death for Christians? Who was Matthew’s community and how are we like them? Dr. Gale will highlight his talk with slides from Jerusalem and from his work as an archaeologist at the Bethsaida site. .

Workshop on Thursday, February 2, 9A – 2:30P. Call IJCU of Muhlenberg College at 484-664-3470 or 484-664-5627 to register. \$35 per person or \$40 with CEU.

Free bonus session: 7:00 pm Dr. Gale will introduce the Jewish Annotated New Testament and discuss its significance for Biblical studies and Jewish - Christian relations. Copies of JANT will be available for purchase.

## Aspires Mentoring Program

The Aspires Mentoring program is looking for dedicated adults to serve as mentors for Allentown youth. Just two hours a week can completely change the life of an at-risk youth.

The Aspires Mentoring Program is also looking for volunteers to help with our “Very Important Parents” program. “Very Important Parents” is a peer support group and educational programming for pregnant and parenting teens in the Allentown School District. Volunteers are needed to help with transportation as well as to serve as mentors in the program. The VIP program is also looking for groups who would be willing to make a hot meal for VIP session(s). VIP meets every other Wednesday from 4:00-8:00 PM and will run until May.

Contact Peter at 610- 439-8653  
 pbond@lehighchurches.org

## Teen Iron Chef



The Aspires Mentoring Program also invites you to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> Teen Iron Chef Dieruff High School Championship.

The event will be held in the cafeteria at Dieruff High School on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:00 PM. The top four teams from the Teen Iron Chef program will be presenting their final meals to a live audience and panel of judges. Come see our young chefs in action and learn more about the program.

## Thank You to All our Elves!!

From our wonderful staff who coordinated it all, to individuals and businesses who adopted families. Santa's elves were many and worked hard to make this Christmas special. Thanks to your overwhelming generosity this Christmas over 135 impoverished children were given gifts, almost a dozen food drives fed the hungry, donated outerwear clothed countless neighbors, and clients celebrated in style! Our heart felt thanks to all our community partners.

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| EZ Micro Solutions   | Kuhn's Garage                                      |
| Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley                          | Air Products                                       |
| Burkholder Funeral Home  | Bonaventure Academy                                |
| Penetron/Blend Pro   | K Heeps Inc,                                       |
| KNBT Bank  | Dun & Bradstreet                                   |
| Health Network Labs, Lehigh Street                             | Bazzini Holdings Inc                               |
| Applied Separations  | Executive Women International of the Lehigh Valley |
| Brown Daub Dodge   |  |
| Lehigh Valley Hospital   |  |
| Young Lawyers Division of the Bar Association of Lehigh County |  |



## Adopting a Family Makes a Difference



Kristen Focht told her parents that instead of gifts this year she wanted to Adopt a Family. She called the Conference of Churches and chose a single mom with two small children. She put great thought into the purchases she made, wanting them to be just right for the people she has never met. On the day the mother came for her gifts, a huge smile came across her face when staff came down the hall with gifts in their hand. Kristen Focht, you have truly made a difference!

## Calling All Youth to Unite & Sing at LCCC Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service

Sunday, January 29, 2012 at 4pm  
First Presbyterian Church  
Corner of Tilghman Street & Cedar Crest Blvd

We are seeking youth in grades 6-12 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 will be available for pick up at the Conference office at 534 Chew St., Allentown.

Rehearsals are on Sundays at First Presbyterian Church,  
January 8, 6:30p-7:30p      January 15, 6:30p-7:30p  
January 22, 6:30p-7:30p      January 29, 3p-3:45p

Instrumentalists are invited to jam with SWIM. To participate or for more information contact Rick Focht at 610-706-0686.

### WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY SERVICE JANUARY 29, 2012

Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Church/School \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Youth: Grade 5-8 \_\_\_\_\_ Grade 9-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 [info@lehighchurches.org](mailto:info@lehighchurches.org) by January 8, 2012.

## Lehigh County Conference of Churches invites you to worship with us at

### 2012 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service

Sunday, January 29, 2012 at 4pm  
First Presbyterian Church of Allentown  
Corner of Tilghman Street & Cedar Crest Blvd

The worship service will feature:

- ✚ The **Most Reverend John O. Barres**, Fourth Bishop of Allentown Roman Catholic Diocese
- ✚ 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:**

The Rev. Elliot Ramos, Ecumenical Director  
610-433-6421; [eramos@lehighchurches.org](mailto:eramos@lehighchurches.org)  
[www.lehighchurches.org](http://www.lehighchurches.org)

#### **Faith and Christian Unity in Action**

*Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ, the mission of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches is to unite communities of faith as ecumenical partners. Putting our faith into action, we minister to and advocate for those in need and encourage all to reach their full potential.*





***If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one.***

***~Mother Teresa***

**Every \$28.00 you raise will provide 100 meals to your hungry neighbors.**

**February , 2012**

Follow these steps:

Step 1 Sign up to collect donations at your church/organization during the month of January and on February 5th.

Step 2 Challenge your congregation, your fraternity/sorority, your co-workers and your friends to donate to feed hungry people on Souper Bowl Sunday by passing soup pots/bowls to receive a special offering in your congregation, by setting aside a time at your Super Bowl party to ask your friends to donate, or holding a special Souper Bowl Sunday event 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 20th, 2012

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.

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# *Lehigh County Conference of Churches*

## **SOUPER BOWL 2012**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Yes, I will help tackle hunger in my community*

*Church/Organization* \_\_\_\_\_

*Contact* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address* \_\_\_\_\_ *State* \_\_\_\_ *Zip Code* \_\_\_\_\_

*Telephone* \_\_\_\_\_ *Fax* \_\_\_\_\_

*E-mail* \_\_\_\_\_

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

# ***ADVOCACY WORKSHOP***

Saturday, February 25, 2012

2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

## **CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES in an ELECTION YEAR**

Lutherans have historically viewed Government as a divine gift from God, given to protect us, that we may live in peace and secure for ourselves daily bread. In a Presidential election year, a Christian voter must ask “Is our Government working “for all?” “How can I, in this election AND in between elections, help it work better?”

Presenter: Marissa Harris Krey, Staff, Lutheran Advocacy PA.

**EVERYONE IS INVITED TO ATTEND. NO REGISTRATION FEE!** Please register by Feb 20.  
Questions? Contact Laretta Adams (610-530-1794) or rradams@ptd.net

ST. MICHAEL/NATIVITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
4004 Tilghman Street, Allentown, PA 18104 (610-395-5062)  
(Across the street from WEGMANS)

Event sponsored by the Congregational Unit of WOMEN of the ELCA.

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FEB 25, 2012 ADVOCACY WORKSHOP: CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES IN AN ELECTION YEAR  
Marissa Harris Krey, Presenter, Lutheran Advocacy PA

REGISTRATION (Registration deadline February 20, 2012) There is no cost for this event.

Name(#1) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name (#2) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name (#3) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Laretta Adams, Nativity Lutheran Church, 4004 Tilghman Street, Allentown, PA 18104  
Phone: 610-530-1794 e-mail: rradams@ptd.net

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

**January 2012**

**Non-Profit Organization**

**U. S. Postage Paid**

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**Ecumenical Encounters**

**January 2012**

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Tom Smith,  
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Tom Walker,  
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Carol Closson,  
The Rev. William Seaman,  
Executive Directors Emeritus

**Lehigh County Conference of Churches**  
**Event Calendar**

**Martin Luther King Interfaith Service**

Congregation Keneseth Israel

2227 Chew Street, Allentown

January 15, 2012 3pm

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service**

First Presbyterian Church of Allentown featuring

The Most Reverend John O. Barres,

Fourth Bishop of Allentown Roman Catholic Diocese

January 29 at 4pm

**Lenten Services & Discussion**

Save the Dates

Seven Wednesdays beginning February 22, 2012 at noon

Join for workshop discussions in downtown Allentown on racism

**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)

**United Way of the  
Greater Lehigh Valley**

