St. Mark's Lutheran Church † 142 Market St. † Williamsport, PA 17701 † 323-4619

The Lion of St. Mark's

JANUARY 2007

Mission at the Crossroads Update

On the evening of December 6, about 25 members of the parish met to review the work of Mission at the Crossroads thus far and to initiate the next steps. After an enjoyable potluck meal, we received a copy of all of the raw data that has been gathered over the past 6 months, especially taking note of the dreams and obstacles raised by nine different groups of members in October and November.

The various comments were gathered into four natural groupings. Each person present was asked to chose the area that most interested him or her and to choose from among those similarly interested persons one who would be the convener of that group. When we next gather on January 17, each of the groups will begin its conversation with those dreams, and at length propose goals for us as a whole congregation. These goals will be then start wending their way through wide-ranging conversations in the committees, council, and the whole congregation, toward the acceptance of some of them for our work together in the Gospel through the coming years.

It has to be a long and careful process so that we are sure that what we propose will be based upon scripture and congruent with the faith and traditions of the church, as well as being aware of the complex world in which we live, gathering insights from as many of the members as who wish to participate, and inviting the acceptance of the results by all.

Whether or not you have been involved in the earlier parts of the process, all members are welcome to attend on January 17. We begin by sharing a potluck meal at 6:15 P.M. and then move to the four interrelated interest groups: (1) Dreams for Growth and Diversity, (2) Dreams for Evangelism –a spirit of contagious enthusiasm for sharing Good News, (3) Dreams for Youth, Christian Education, Music, and Related programs, and (4) Dreams for Change and Preserving Traditions. Copies of the raw data reports are available to any member on the table in the Front Lounge or by request through the office.

And...complementing Mission at the Crossroads

Many others are engaged in the kinds of conversation we are having at St. Mark's concerning life and mission of the congregation. Running in parallel with our process, a session for congregational leaders with David Daubert, ELCA Executive for the Renewal of Congregations, will be held on Tuesday, February 13 6:00 – 8:30 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Liverpool. The title is *An Awkward Conversation that Needs to Happen: Moving from Chaplaincy to a Missional Church.* Persons who are interested in attending are asked to speak with the pastor, or email our consultant, Beth Yenchko at eyenchko@ltsg.edu.

COUNCIL UPDATE

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Council Notes

The Congregation Council did not have a regular session during December. Instead, President Harold Hershberger and his wife Joyce invited the members and their spouses to a dinner held at the Womens Club on the evening of December 11.

Members enjoyed each other's company, and were thanked by the President and Pastor for their continuing service to the Lord Jesus through St. Mark's.

The Council will gather for its next regular session on

Directory Changes:

- Gregory Calvert, 901 State Route 287, Jersey Shore, PA 17740-8140
- Mr. & Mrs. Michael Patrick, Jr., 19 S. Vernon St., York, PA 17402

WOMEN OF ST. MARK'S WINTER MEETING

Mark your calendars to meet for lunch at Hoss's at 12:00 noon on January 24th. The Women of St. Mark's donate most of the money earned at the rummage sales, plus the matching funds from Thrivent, to various charities. Your input is needed to help decide who will be the recipients.

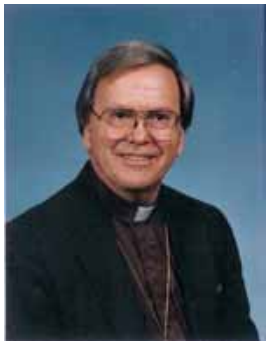
Activities for 2007 will be discussed as well. Any female who is a member of St. Mark's is welcome.

Website & E- Mail Addresses

stmarkswilliamsport.org

General mailbox	stmarks@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Gary Weber	gweber@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Bernadette Jones	bjones@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Susan Bennett	sbennett@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Richard Lakey	rlakey@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Pastor Elkin	pastor@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Lou DeSeau	ldeseau@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Sharon Comini	scomini@stmarkswilliamsport.org
Susan M-Smith	smsmith@stmarkswilliamsport.org

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY NEWS



IN MEMORIAM

Celebration of Life Service
Saturday, January 20, 2007
2:00 p.m
St. Mark's Lutheran Church

(Following the service, there will be a light meal and a time of fellowship.)

The Rev. Dr. Walter L. Brandau, 76, passed from this life and into the presence of the God he so faithfully served on Dec. 7, 2006 at Hospice House Woodside, Pinellas Park, FL.

Pastor Brandau was born March 19, 1930 in Hazleton, PA, the son of Martin E. Brandau and Dorothy Richards Brandau. He was baptized into the Christian Church at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hazleton, PA. He married Shirley Jean Welker of Sunbury, PA at Zion Lutheran Church where she was serving as the office secretary.

Pastor Brandau was ordained through Gettysburg Theological Seminary in 1954 and Chicago Seminary in 1966. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from Susquehanna University in 1981. Prior to St. Mark's, he led St. John's Lutheran Church of Espy and Hidlay Lutheran Church of Bloomsburg, PA., Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of Berlin, PA, Trinity Lutheran Church of Milton, PA and Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Johnstown, PA. Pastor Brandau was called to be the pastor of St. Mark's in 1984, and he served the congregation until his retirement in 1995.

Pastor Brandau's work at St. Mark's brought on an improvement in Sunday School enrollment while adding more young families to the membership. He was instrumental in updating the church facilities and area around the church, the establishment of the East parking lot and the renovation of the 2nd floor of the Parish House & library. He developed innovative approaches to his ministry for children, including using hand puppets and dramatics to illustrate Bible stories. His portrayal of Martin Luther in a dramatic setting was much admired. Members of St. Mark's remember him fondly as a warm and Godly Pastor.

Pastor Brandau was a member of various Synodical Committees and served on Tressler Lutheran Social Services' Board. He was a member of the Rotary International and was their group study leader to India. In addition he was a Boy Scout leader in various communities. He held a strong concern for social ministry and participated in flood relief efforts in stricken communities in Florida, South Carolina and other areas.

He loved to spend time with his family, travel, camp and hike, paint, quilt and enjoyed wild flower photography. Pastor Brandau, along with Clyde Peeling owner of Reptiland, Williamsport, traveled to Ecuador to study reptile habitats in the Amazon Rain Forest. He was a pianist and organist.

Pastor Brandau is survived by his wife Shirley, their children, and grandchildren. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Shirley W. Brandau, 7801 11th Street N., Apt. #308, St. Petersburg, FL 33702.

Should you desire, memorial gifts may be made to a charity of your choice or to one of the following local charities:

The Gate House
C/O Providence Health System Foundation
1001 Grampian Boulevard
Williamsport, PA 17701

Alzheimer's Support Group
C/O Providence Health System Foundation
1001 Grampian Boulevard
Williamsport, PA 17701

Please clearly indicate on the check the contribution is in memory of The Rev. Dr. Walter L. Brandau.
Otherwise, the contribution will be placed into a general account.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY NEWS

Upcoming Milestone calendar

January 7 – Remembrance of Baptism, Giving of the Faith Chests

February 4 – All the Languages of Good News

February 25 – Prayer Pillows

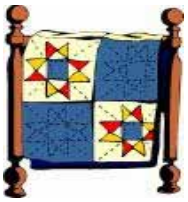
March 11, 18, and 25 – Blessing of Affirmers

April 7 – Affirmation of Baptism

May 6 – Wedding Anniversary

May 27 – Sending out members of *The Way* with prayers for their Christian Vocation

SEWING IS THERAPEUTIC!



Now that the busy holidays are at an end, are you thinking about something to do to pass the winter doldrums? THINK SCHOOL BAGS! Last year we did not have enough school bags to hand out to all those who wanted them. We have fabric and simple instructions but need people to make them. In June the bags will be available in the Narthex to be filled with school items and sent to Lutheran World Relief.

We also need help with our ongoing quilt project. Assembling and knotting take place every Wednesday morning in the Parish House. Quilt tops can be made at home. Old blankets for fillers and sheets (in good condition) for backings are badly needed as donations.

It is very rewarding to make beautiful and useful things out of leftovers. We have so much, but there is suffering all over the world. Won't you share your abundances, of time and materials? Talk to Louise Kneedler or Shirley Hill.

Nursery Servers Invited To Dine

The quiet behind the scenes work, of those who care for some of our youngest members of St. Mark's during worship, is indeed appreciated. It is reassuring to know that when parents need a helping hand, others are ready to be of assistance.

Each year the Pastor personally thanks one of the groups who serve the worshipping community in particular ways. As a mark of appreciation this year, Pastor Elkin is inviting those who serve in the Nursery to be guests for dinner at 6:00 on Sunday evening, January 14, 2007 in Fellowship Hall. He only asks that those who are on the nursery service list kindly RSVP by Monday, January 8, so that proper preparations can be made.

Lunch N' Fellowship

January 17th at Noon

Pork & Sauerkraut
Smashed Potatoes

Bring a dish to share.

Why not invite a friend?

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY NEWS

Watoto Children's Choir

Coming to West Milton!

Watoto means: "the children." Since 1994, Watoto Children's Choir from Kampala, Uganda, has regularly toured the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Accompanied by a small team of adults, Watoto's performances are a soulful blend of native African rhythms, contemporary Gospel music and ethnic dance.

These children are among the more than 2 million children in Uganda that have had the tragic and life-threatening experience of losing one or both of their parents to the AIDS virus or to war. Now, through their lively and inspiring performances, the Watoto Children's Choir shares their unique experiences, as well as their new-found joy and hope, which thrill and dazzle audiences everywhere.

Come see them on January 3, 2007 at 7pm at United in Christ Lutheran Church, 1875 Churches Road, 2 miles west of Route 15/West Milton. Call 570-568-2254 for

Our Personal Connection with Foreign Missions

Carl Hieber is preparing for another trip to Tanzania in March as an assistant in a medical mission to areas with little regular medical care. He is asking the congregation to assist in preparations by bringing a regular 6 x 8 school tablet by mid-January when he plans to send a box ahead so that it will be there and ready for him to distribute when he arrives. Please purchase regular, tear-off tablets, without spiral bindings, and bring them to the container in the narthex.

Leave a Legacy for Ministry and Mission: Who needs a will?

Every adult who owns anything, has children, and/or cares what happens at the time of her/his death; also, anyone who believes in life-long stewardship and wants to remember favorite ministries of the ELCA. For more information about how to make charitable gifts using your will or other ways to make charitable gifts call Pr. Greg Kramer at the Lutheran Planned Giving Office at 570-374-2044 or call the ELCA Foundation, 800/638-3522, ext. 2970 or visit our website at www.elca.org/fo

Nurse's Notes

January 7 It's the dawning of a new year, so don't forget to schedule important exams with your physician, dentist, eye doctor, and other specialists!

January 14 Time for some household safety checks! Clean out your medicine chest; discard any out dated medications don't risk your safety over expired products. Ladies, how about replacing any eye make-up older than 6 months, as well as those bath "puffs" you use for bathing – they are breeding grounds for bacteria. Replace tooth brushes older than 3 months.

January 21 Here's a high fiber alternative to tomato or cream sauces on pasta: toss the cooked pasta with canned or homemade lentil or other bean soup. This is a quick version of the nutri tious pasta-and-bean dishes popular in Italy. Or, puree the soup before adding to the pasta!

January 28 Use elastic exercise bands if you want to increase strength, but are intimidated by the idea of lifting weights, or do not have access to weightlifting equipment. The long, wide bands provide resistance needed to work your muscles. They are cheap, easy to carry around, and versatile – they can even be used by those who are wheelchair bound. Available in most sporting-goods stores, they often come with easy, illustrated booklets.

USS ARK

West Branch Clergy and Congregations

The Rev. Steven Shipman has accepted a call to United Lutheran Church in Lock Haven. He will begin his ministry there in February. Still without regularly called pastors are St. John's "Brick", Montgomery (interim Rev. Gunther Bernhardt) and Zion, Renovo (interim Rev. Ralph Heagy).

Friends Living Out Our Discipleship

F.L.O.O.D. Susquehanna University is a youth event for 6-12 graders on Sunday, January 7, 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM in the S.U. Field House. Each youth group is asked to bring a bag of snacks to share. Participants should bring swim gear and court shoes. Register with $5 at Sylvia Kohl at sylviak022656@evenlink.net or $7.50 at the door.

Event at Morris Run

Siloa Lutheran Church in Morris Run is hosting a Liberia Sunday January 28. A Liberian Style Dinner is scheduled at 1:00 PM and a presentation at 2:30 PM.

Liberia

The Upper Susquehanna Synod is sending another work team to the Lutheran Church in Liberia. From our Conference Sandy Nelson of St. Michael's will be traveling. She plans to teach English literacy at the Lutheran Training Institute near Sanoyea.

Taizé Service

A prayer service in the style of the evangelical community of Taizé will be held Monday, January 22 at Trinity Episcopal Church. Enjoy this quiet and meditative service that is offered in various area churches every fourth Monday of the month.

Rural Ministry Conference 2007

The ministry of the church in rural and small town America has a future. It is a ministry that is intimately connected with the future lived out by farmers, factory workers, ranchers, business owners, loggers, health-care providers, and every other type of person who lives and works in these communities. The question is, "What kind of a future will it be? How will the church respond to the Spirit of God who continues to renew and form faith through the good news of Jesus Christ?" This conference will explore how our current ministry can be sustainable into that good, compassionate, productive, and more humanizing future. Come. Be a part of the future now! Click here for information: http://www.ruralministry.com/conference/Conference.htm

Gathering for Large Congregations

While we don't have many large congregations in our synod, we do have a few and a number of growing ones. The ELCA is holding an event for large congregations called "Let the River Flow" on June 18-21. Here is the link for information about this event: http://www.elca.org/largecongregations. Check it out!

Worth Repeating: FLOOD SU!

FLOOD (Friends Living Out Our Discipleship), the youth ministry arm of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, is again hosting FLOOD SU. We flood the field house at Susquehanna University, and enjoy the pool, volleyball and basketball courts, worship and hang out together. This year we will do so on January 7, 2007, from 2-5 pm. Registration forms have been mailed to congregations already, but you can get another if you need it from the synod office. Cost is $5 if paid in advance, $7.50 at the door. Pool will be open from 2:30-4:30. We need to know numbers of people attending to determine the number of lifeguards. Each group is asked to bring a bag of snacks. Of course, appropriate swimwear and footwear is important. Please bring one adult for every six youth. We also plan something for the adults who are there.

Social Ministry News

From the Social Ministry Committee

- Each year The American Rescue Workers fill several hundred Christmas food baskets for needy families in our community. This year we supported their efforts by donating more than a barrel full of canned yams. Thank you for answering the call to serve those in need in our community.

- St Mark's Elves made their annual visit December 6, 2005 to the Selinsgrove Center to entertain and visit with a group of women in the CM-6 Living Area. The elves included Pastor and Donna Elkin, Jackie and Shirley Kinney, Sharon Comini, Lou DeSeau, Ernestine Doane, Jane Zimmerer, Gladys Knauss, Lou Kolb, Elsie Sechler, Mary Ann Stiller, and Becky Miller Pryor. The residents and their caregivers enjoyed songs, stories, gifts, and fellowship. Heartfelt thanks and appreciation is extended to the members of the congregation who donated cups of pudding or money to offset the cost of hosting this event. A special thank you goes to Larue Dieter for making all of our packages bright and cheery and to Shirley Kinney for baking soft sugar cookies. (These were the only cookies the ladies could eat.) This was our first time entertaining these ladies, but we plan on making it a St. Mark's tradition.

American Red Cross

Together, we can save a life

Blood Donations Needed

Blood donations are down and everyone is needed to help replenish the supply. The holidays are typically a time when supply is low and the demand is great. Please consider donating at one the collection sites below. If you have questions about donating please call 570-326-9131.

Tuesday, January 2nd **12:00 to 6:00 PM**
First Baptist Church
420 Elmira Street,
Williamsport, Pa

Friday, January 5th **12:00 to 5:00 PM**
Divine Providence Hospital
1100 Grampian Blvd.
Williamsport, PA

Monday, January 8th **12:00 to 6:00 PM**
Genetti Hotel
200 West Fourth St.
Williamsport, PA

Thursday, January 11th **12:00 to 6:00 PM**
Saint Ann's Catholic Church
1220 Northway Road
Williamsport, PA

Celebration of Life Service for The Rev. Dr. Walter Brandau

Saturday, January 20, 2007
2:00 PM
St. Mark's Lutheran Church

A Celebration of Life Service will be held for The Rev. Dr. Walter Brandau on Saturday, January 20th at 2 p.m. at St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

Church members are invited to come to honor the memory and remember the life of Pastor Brandau. (See article on page 3)

A fellowship meal will follow the service offering a time of sharing with the family. Members desiring to bring a dish to share are welcome to do so.

United Churches News

Food Pantry Update

Donations, if possible, should be brought into the Food Pantry on Monday mornings from 9:30-Noon. We are located in the Sojourner Truth Building on the corner of High & Center Sts.

Items we are currently in need of:

Spaghetti Sauce	Canned Fruit
Oodles of Noodles	Tuna Helper
Chicken Noodle Soup	Sugar—1lb. Box
Coffee & Tea Bags	Crackers
Powdered Drink Mixes	Chunky Soups
Fruit juices in plastic bottles	Jelly
Hamburger Helper	Canned Stews

Dancing Like the Stars

Ballroom Dancing and Instruction

by Nancie Wagner from Studio Brick of Danville

Saturday, January 27th at 7 PM
Trinity Episcopal Church Gym
844 W. 4th St., Williamsport

All churches are invited to join the UCM students for a night of learning dances like the Waltz, the Somba, the Salsa, the Cha-Cha, and even some line dances from the 80's.

Refreshments will be served.

The cost is $5 each for students and $10 each for adults.

Poverty & Housing

According to the 2000 Census, **55%** of Williamsport's residents live in rental units and **35.2%** of those renters live below the poverty level. The median total family income in Lycoming County is only **$34,016, 18%** lower than the average for our State. The people most negatively affected are our children. According to the State Department of Education, **24.7%** of the children in Lycoming County live below the poverty level. Studies show that in school these children do not perform as well and exhibit greater behavior problems than children in homeowner families.

Some Good News—Journey House

New Covenant United Church of Christ with support from numerous non-profit organizations, foundations, and local government will soon be opening a facility—Journey House—that will provide housing and programming to support families inour county who are homeless.

If you are interested in participating in this endeavor call New Covenant at 326-3308. They will be on demolition from 8-4 Wednesdays, 8 AM-9 PM Thursdays and 8-4 Saturdays. If a group is interested in coming another day, arrangements can be made.

Wednesday Ecumenical Lunch

United Churches of Lycoming County invite you to join them for their Wednesday Noon Ecumenical Luncheon. You're always assured of a tasty $4 lunch, warm, ecumenical fellowship and a thoughtful program designed to enrich your life mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. The parking is free in the Pine Street lot north of the church from 11 AM to 1:30 PM No reservations are necessary.

January Luncheon Speakers:

3rd **No Luncheon or Program Scheduled**

10th **Mrs. Janice Trapp,** Director, and **Mr. Jeffrey Swoope,** Assistant Director, James V. Brown Library, "***Learning Starts Here; the Campaign for our Library"***

17th **Mrs. Evadna Cline,** Executive Director, Yokefellow Prison Ministry, ***"Go Tell It…"***

24th **Rev. Maurice Frontz,** First Vice President, United Churches, Associate Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, ***"Week of Prayer for Christian Unity"***

31st **Major Steven Stoops,** Officers in Charge, Salvation Army, ***"All About the Army"***

Everyone in our congregations and community is welcome to participate in this ministry . Please make plans to join us and you're welcome to bring a friend.

YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

It was a busy time but we loved every minute of it!

Advent Wreaths and Trees

Twenty-six people (nine families) attended this Advent celebration. We all sat down to a light lunch after the 10:30 service. The making of the wreaths followed. During and after the wreath-making, the children decorated their tree with the hand-made wooden ornaments given to them last year.

While some of us were busy with the indoor activities, an intrepid group of individuals armed with lights and cords and ladders and a truck advanced on the blue spruce out back. The youngest (and lightest) of this stalwart troop was sent up the ladder to attach the star, receiving directives the entire time from those below. The lion's share of the work was done that day. The lighting and wiring was completed before the third Sunday of Advent; giving plenty of time to let the light shine out, celebrating the season of Christ's birth.

Kids' Morning Out

What a great time! Over a dozen children attended this event on Saturday, December 9. They made and decorated cookies for our shut-ins, made birdfeeders and presents for their families, sang and listened to some stories. The parents were appreciative of the time to run errands and greeted each other as their paths crossed at the mall! A good time was had by all!

A big "THANK YOU" goes out to Hannah, Christina, and Sara for their invaluable assistance with the younger children. Thank you, too, for allowing us to enjoy your children for a few hours. We look forward to having even more children join us for this special morning next year!

Cookie Baking

Another huge "THANK YOU" goes out to Jackie for her able assistance later on that Saturday with the cookie baking. We produced lots of cookies to share and for the carolers to deliver that Sunday.

A wonderful assortment of goodies was assembled during this afternoon: pizelles (dropped off by Donna on her way to Emma's first birthday party), chocolate chip cookies and date-filled cookies; along with the mystery cookies and decorated cut-out cookies made by the children… We hope more folks can join us next year. THANK YOU!!!

Caroling

Bearing trays of the treats made during the two preceding events, 16 (17?) members of the congregation, aged 6 to over-60, split into three teams of 5-6 carolers to visit some of our shut-ins on Sunday, December 10. We were warmly welcomed by all who were home as we arrived at their homes "making a joyful noise!" We returned to the church for a time of fellowship and to share memories and messages from those we visited.

- **As one of your New Year resolutions, could you plan on being involved in this sharing of the message of Christmas next year? Even though there were enough for three**

YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

The John Bower Basketball League ~ ~ St. Mark's Lions

All of our kids played excellent first games on December 16. The two older teams competed with scores going up and down and tying several times during play—resulting, unfortunately, in losses for each: Midgets—10-11 and Pee-Wees—14-19. The Beginner Pee-Wees played very well their first time out, but lost 0-12.

The children were great sports and played well. We couldn't be more proud of them.

Practices resume January 2, 2007, Tuesdays, at Trinity Episcopal Church. The Beginner Pee Wee team practices from 6 pm until 6:45 pm, the Pee Wee team will practice from 6:45 pm to 7:30 pm, and the Midgets from 7:30 pm to 8:15 pm

JOHN BOWER 2006-2007 SUNDAY SCHOOL BASKETBALL LEAGUE

SCHEDULE FOR *ST. MARK'S LIONS* BEGINNERS & MIDGETS AND *MESSIAH'S* PEE-WEES

BEGINNER PEE-WEES

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	COMPETITORS
Jan. 6	1:00 pm	Arena Center	St. Ann's-A *vs*. St. Mark's
Jan. 13	10:00am	Arena Center	St. Mark's *vs*. St. Lawrence
Jan. 20	1:30 pm	Arena Center	St. Mark's *vs*. Annunciation-A
Jan. 27	9:00 am	Arena Center	St. Mark's *vs*. Faith U.M.

PEE-WEES

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	COMPETITORS
Jan. 6	12:00 pm	Arena West	Amazing Grace Ministries *vs*. Messiah
Jan. 13	10:00 am	Arena West	Immaculate Conception Stallions *vs*. Messiah
Jan. 20	2:00 pm	Arena West	Antioch Baptist *vs.* Messiah
Jan. 27	12:00 pm	Arena West	Immaculate Conceptn Knockouts *vs*. Messiah

MIDGETS

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	COMPETITORS
Jan. 6	10:00 am	Arena East	Covenant Central Presby. *vs*. St. Mark's
Jan. 13	10:30 am	Arena East	St. Mark's *vs*. Christian Church at C.S.
Jan. 20	10:00 am	Arena East	St. Mark's *vs*. Newberry Catholic
Jan. 27	1:00 pm	upstairs Main	St. Mark's *vs*. St. Ann's-B

Players, please arrive a half-hour early for your games!!

To all members of the congregation,
please take some time out of your day to cheer on some our young ambassadors.
Your support could make the difference!

YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

Passing the Faith: Blessing of the Keys

Did you know??? We have a special milestone celebration for the youth in our congregation who attain their junior driver's licenses. It's a meaningful observance, during which the new driver gives up something from his or her childhood in exchange for the new responsibility of driving. We have also developed a means of recognition for those drivers receiving their senior license.

Unfortunately, we have no idea exactly when youth are reaching these important milestones in their lives–unless you tell us!! Please let the church know if you or your child has recently received a junior or senior license as soon as possible. A date for celebration will be set once we know who these special teens are. PLEASE CALL US!!

Passing the Faith: Third Grade Milestone

Jarrett Eyer, James Newcomer and Nastassiya Rockwell received their Bibles at the 10:30 service on December 10. Their families highlighted favorite passages and included messages and prayers for the children. A delicious lunch of stuffed shells, salad and bread followed the service.

Children's Church will be held on Sunday, January 14, 2007, at 10:30 AM in the Chapel. We look forward to seeing your family there!

Tablets for Tanzania will be the special offering that day. The Tablets should be regular, tear-off tablets, without spiral bindings. Carl Hieber will deliver them during his mission trip to

Faith Life Weekly, a take-home resource, is available in the Narthex every Sunday. This resource offers an at-home plan for nurturing faith and faith practices based on Sunday's worship service. Also, ***Kid's Celebrate*** is available for youth to use during the worship service or to take home to add to family devotional time throughout the week. Stop and pick up a copy!

SIMPLE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

The story of the Birth of our Lord was musically proclaimed at 9:15 a.m., December 24, and again at the 7:00 Christmas Eve service.

Many thanks go out to our wonderful cast, ranging in age from 2 years to...well, we won't reveal that. Our youthful actors include: Jarrett Eyer, Theoron Hershey, Ben Haussmann, Stefan Weber, Makensi Doebler, Kara Hershey, Riley Weber, Emily Newcomer, Laura Zeigler, Madalyn Fortin, Sadie Wentzel, Taylor Wentzel, Annika Waffenschmidt, Anna Zeigler, Sean Jensen, Hannah Haussmann, Lynna Robertson, Amalie Robertson, Gabriella Gregory and Elizabeth Haussmann.

The teens and adults lending their vocal talents to tell the story are: Mel Wentzel, Mindy Wentzel, Pam Jensen, Sara Jones, Diana Zeigler, Stephanie Fortin, Gary Weber, Jane Kline, Joyce Hershberger, Jennifer Robertson, Trish Hershey, Shelby Weber, Vicki Haussmann, Bud Doebler, Declan Jones, Lou DeSeau, Bob Jones, Ruth Burkholder, Andrea Gregory and Beth Shafranko.

Special assistance with refreshments, props, costumes and cast management was received from Becky Miller-Pryor, Jack Burkholder, Shirley Kinney, Jackie Kinney, Lois Smith, Bonnie Eyer, Steve Eyer, Trish Hershey, Beth Shafranko and Hannah Ramsauer. Sharon designed and painted a beautiful background for the children.

Thank you to all those who stopped to hear our story–may it live in you hearts through the New Year.

HEALTH, HEALING & WHOLENESS

"*Normal is just a town in Illinois.*" I heard that statement recently, and had to chuckle, but then I found myself asking, what ***is*** "normal?" When used in the context of mental health, sometimes the answer can be pretty clear, the affected person may hear voices, have hallucinations, or may have grandiose ideas that he or she is the leader of a foreign country. But often times, the issue is not readily evident.

One of the primary influences in determining what is normal or acceptable, is the culture and values of the world around us. What may seem to be bazaar behavior to us may not be considered so in another country or culture. In addition, research and medicine both impact our definition of normal, and although there may be no definite blood test or x-ray that may determine mental health, many disorders do indeed appear to be connected to biological or brain chemistry.

Mental health professionals are trained to define mental disorders by determining signs, symptoms and/or impairment to one's ability to function on a day-to-day basis. Signs are objective observations, such as agitation, rapid breathing or heart rate. Symptoms are more subjective, such as how the individual feels - sadness, anger, hopelessness. Combined, signs and symptoms may appear as: behaviors (ex. repeated hand washing), feelings (ex. sadness), thoughts (ex. thinking that the TV is controlling the mind), physical responses (ex. sweating, heart pounding). This information is gathered through a variety of approaches, which are likely to include: the patient/client's own perceptions, other's reactions or perceptions, cultural norms, or statistical values (gathered through various verbal or written tests). Additional factors include:

How long have the symptoms been occurring? How severe are the symptoms? How upsetting are they to you? How do the symptoms affect your life? Still, a precise definition of normal mental health is not possible at this time (MayoClinic.com).

Many people suffer in silence, because biases against mental illness and lack of awareness are among the obstacles that affect willingness to seek care, thus limiting access to treatment. Insurance coverage for mental health issues does not equal that of biological illnesses, further affecting treatment. Yet mental illnesses are a major public health concern. They adversely affect functioning, economic productivity, the capacity for healthy relationships and families, physical health, and the overall quality of life. They cut across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines to affect a significant proportion of communities worldwide. It's been estimated that one third of the homeless in America, suffer from mental illness. In addition, the prevalence of dementia is rising as people are living longer, adding to the need for more resources.

Both genetic and environmental factors influence one's vulnerability to mental illness. Traumatic events throughout one's lifetime, including childhood abuse or neglect, major losses, violence, military combat, and dislocation (as among the urban homeless or wartime refugees) are known to threaten mental stability. Non-traumatic stressors, including unemployment, bereavement, and relational or occupational problems, can impact mental health. Nutritional deficiencies (such as vitamin B12), infections (such as syphilis and HIV [human immunodeficiency virus]), and heavy metal poisoning (such as lead) can all cause psychiatric syndromes. Substance abuse may be precipitated by, or worsen healthy functioning.

In the majority of instances, treatment is available. As communities of faith, it is our responsibility to advocate for, and promote the development of mental health practices. It is a social justice issue. Christ did not turn his back on those who "suffered from an evil spirit" - he didn't shrunk away, but instead offered a healing hand. For "*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (NRSV, Mt. 25:40)*

Blessings to all as this New Year begins!
Debbie Best, Program Coordinator
Congregational Health Ministries & Family Life Services; Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

BIRTHDAYS

Suzanne Hutchins	01/01	Ruth Rees	01/17
Shelby Weber	01/01	Beth Miller	01/17
Cecil Calvert	01/02	Zayne Dietterick	01/18
Jeremy Hinds	01/02	Brenda Bittner	01/19
Ashley Ciesielski	01/02	Morgan Comini	01/19
Katherine Crane	01/03	Courtney Bieber	01/20
Charlotte Hughes	01/03	Elizabeth Ruesskamp	01/22
Elizabeth Chrisman	01/04	Christina MacGill	01/23
James Newcomer	01/04	Tara Thorne	01/23
Laurie Marchese	01/05	Walter Doebler	01/25
Mary Lou Doebler	01/06	Bonnie Eyer	01/26
Louise Kneedler	01/06	David Heaps	01/26
Shirley Dieffenbach	01/08	Marc Kinney	01/26
Andrew Zeigler	01/10	Robert Smith	01/26
Peter Zeigler	01/10	Ruth Burkholder	01/27
Toby Zimmerman	01/10	Dustin Kimble	01/27
Kathy Kolb	01/12	Phyllis Ulman	01/27
Mary Armstrong	01/13	Sean Buckman	01/28
Jackie Kinney	01/13	Jonathan Phillips	01/28
Riley Weber	01/14	Theoron Hershey	01/29
Donna Boston	01/17	Linda DeSeau	01/30
Nathan Kimble	01/17	Devin Owen	01/30
Ruth Lamade	01/17	Travis Thorne	01/30
Barbara McCullough	01/17		

ANNIVERSARIES

Arthur & June Decker	01/20
Charles & Ruth Homan	01/23

In Memoriam - The Rev. Dr. Raymond Shaheen

Pastor Shaheen died on Tuesday, December 12, in Northumberland, PA. He served Messiah Lutheran Church, South Williamsport, PA, and a congregation in Silver Spring, MD. During his retirement years, Pastor Shaheen served as interim chaplain and special assistant to the President at Susquehanna University.

SPECIAL THANK YOU'S

Dear Friends & Members,

The office staff would like to thank everyone for the wonderful gifts of food and cookies that arrived almost daily over the holidays. Your generosity of spirit never fails to make us feel special, and at this time of the year, a little bit pudgy!

Thanks again!
Pastor, Dick, Lou, Bernadette, Sharon, Sue & Susan

Dear friends at St. Mark's Lutheran Church:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thank you for your recent donations of $120 on November 29, 2006 and $292.50 on October 19, 2006 to the Shepherd of the Streets ministry. Your continued faithfulness and support are deeply appreciated.

If it were not for your support and the support of others life you, we could not offer the hope and love we share in Christ to those who need to know they are not alone as they face life's situations on a day-to-day basis. Your contribution to us is an answer to prayer and an affirmation that God's Word is true.

This is your ministry at work, giving people a hand up and not a hand out. May God's peace and blessing be with you.

Serving Him and you,
J. Morris Smith, Th. D.
Shepherd of the Streets

To the carolers;

Thank you so much for stopping by and singing some Christmas songs. It was beautiful. Also thank the boys and girls for the plate of cookies. They really tasted good with my coffee. May you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

~Nancy Bohartz

The Pastor writes: Thanks-living

Let this be our attitude at all times. Our main task is saying thank-you to the Lord God who makes us and gives us all that we have and are. It is not left to a day or a season. Each person can get busy on a list of reasons for thanks, first offering them to God, and then also to our companions. Here are a few samples from my list:

- Thanks be to God and to the congregation for providing the opportunity to be involved in the archeological dig in Tiberias, Israel this past fall. It was some of the most enjoyable hard work I have ever done.
- Thanks be to God and to all 40+ who graciously sent me cards to welcome me home after the adventure. I was greatly encouraged.
- Thanks be to God and to so many persons for the warm greetings Donna and I received in person, by card, and by gifts during this Christmas season.
- Thanks be to God and to all those who serve in many capacities for the leadership of worship at St. Mark's. We are all blessed and strengthened by each person's contribution.
- Thanks be to God and to the six persons who serve on our paid staff and to the dozens of persons who are unpaid leaders in so many different ways in the parish, all those who understand that it is truly our work <u>together</u> that is most blessed by God.

What would you add from your list?

SPECIAL CONCERNS LIST

Patricia Alexander
1745 Chestnut St.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Jeannette Aderhold
2809 Four Mile Drive
Montoursville, PA 17754

Nancy Bohartz
624 Sixth Ave.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Bonita Crossly
R.R. #1, Box 1001
Hillsgrove, PA 18619-9300

June Decker
338 Sherwood Ave.
South Williamsport, PA 17702

Larue Dieter
2150 Warrensville Road, Apt. 2
Montoursville, PA 17754

Jane & Luther Doebler
Wmspt. Home, Apt. #115A
Williamsport, PA 17701

Harriet Fornwalt
729 Wilson Street
Williamsport, PA 17701

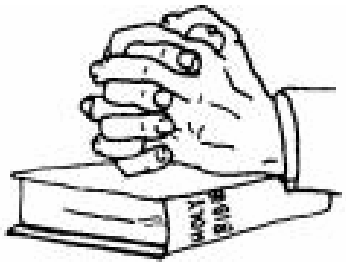
Doris Fortin
Rose View Center
1251 Rural Ave., Room 223
Williamsport, PA 17701

Earl Foulkrod
Sycamore Manor
1445 Sycamore Rd., Rm. 403
Montoursville, PA 17754

Jean Gulliver
3039 Elimsport Road
Montgomery, PA 17752

Charles Homan
2215 Warrensville Rd.
Montoursville, PA 17754

Charlotte Hughes
140 Blueberry Lane
Williamsport, PA 17701



Lucille Markel
Rose View Court, Apt. 307
1251 Rural Ave.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Anne Miller
947 Hepburn St.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Jane Oakes
833 Funston Avenue
Williamsport, PA 17701

Frank Pile
Manor Care S., Rm. 52
Williamsport, PA 17701

Anne Rhodes c/o Carole Finn
20308 Cabana Drive
Germantown, MD 20876

Dorothy Rivetti
Manor Care North Room 108A
Williamsport, PA 17701

Marian Rubendahl
1900 Ravine Road Bldg. C
Williamsport Home Apt. 1010
Williamsport, PA 17701

James Sheaffer
Rose View Court Rm. 321
1251 Rural Ave.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Mary Helen Scinicarello
Danville St. Hospital
Ward #311
Danville, PA 17821

Geraldine Shipman
1900 Ravine Rd.
Apt. #222A
Williamsport, PA 17701

Kester & Eleanor Sobers
425 W Highland Ave.
S. Williamsport, PA 17702

Ira Tuxford
1838-Blanchard Ave.
Williamsport, PA 17701

Ralph Zeigler Sr.
Rose View Court
1251 Rural Ave., Apt. 209
Williamsport, P A 17701

SAINT MARK'S CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 **8th Day of Christmas** **Office Closed**	*2* **9th Day of Christmas** 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*3* **10th Day of Christmas** 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 9:15 AM Staff Mtg. & Sewing 12:00 PM Bible Study	*4* **11th Day of Christmas** 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 7:30 PM Kantorei	*5* **12th Day of Christmas** 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*6* **Epiphany of Our Lord** 9:00 AM Catechetical Retreat** 10:00 AM Midgets Game 12:00 PM Pee Wee Game 1:00 PM Beg. Pee Wee game
7 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM Remembrance of Baptism/Faith Chests/ Medallions 9:15 AM Sunday School 4:00 PM The Way 5:15 PM Fam. Handbell	*8* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 6:45 PM Handbells 7:00 PM Civic Chorus	*9* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 10:00 AM Conference Pastors @ COS 6:30 PM Property Comm. Mtg. 7:00 PM Worship & Music	*10* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 9:15 AM Staff Mtg. & Sewing 12:00 PM Bible Study 7:00 PM Mutual Ministry	*11* 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM Stephen Min. Mtg. 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 7:30 PM Senior Choir	*12* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*13* **Snow date for Catechetical Retreat 10:00 AM Beg. Pee Wee Game 10:00 AM Pee Wee Game 10:30 AM Midgets Game
14 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM HC 9:15 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Children's Ch. 5:00 PM Nursery Volunteer Dinner 5:15 PM Fam. Handbell	*15* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 6:45 PM Handbells 7:00 PM Civic Chorus	*16* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 6:30 PM Financial Committee Mtg.	*17* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 9:15 AM Staff Mtg. & Sewing 12:00 PM Lunch 'N' Fellowship	*18* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 7:30 PM Senior Choir	*19* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*20* 10:00 AM Midgets Game 10:00 AM Pee Wee Game 1:30 PM Beg. Pee Wee Game 2:00 PM Memorial Service for Pastor Brandau
21 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM HC 9:15 AM Sunday School 4:00 PM The Way 5:15 PM Fam. Handbell 6:00 PM Mtg./meal with Confirmands	*22* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 6:30 PM Council Mtg. 6:45 PM Handbells 7:00 PM Civic Chorus	*23* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*24* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 9:15 AM Staff Mtg. & Sewing 12:00 PM Bible Study	*25* 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM Stephen Min. Mtg. 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 7:30 PM Senior Choir	*26* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*27* 9:00 AM Beg. Pee Wee Game 12:00 PM Pee Wee Game 1:00 PM MIdgets Game 5:30 PM Meal for Lyco. Tour Choir 7:00 PM Lyco Tour Choir Concert
28 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM HC 9:15 AM Sunday School 5:15 PM Fam. Handbell	*29* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 6:45 PM Handbells 7:00 PM Civic Chorus	*30* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer	*31* 9:00 AM Morning Prayer 9:15 AM Staff Mtg. & Sewing 12:00 PM Bible Study			

December 06

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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31						

February 07

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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
142 MARKET ST.
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701

Phone: 570-323-4619
Fax: 570-323-2452

Website: http://www.stmarkswilliamsport.org
Email: stmarks@stmarkswilliamsport.org

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HOUSE-BLESSINGS PLANNED DURING EPIPHANY

Pastor Elkin will be accepting invitations to the homes of members during the Epiphany season, January 6 to February 8 for a house- blessing. It is appropriate for all sizes of families and dwellings. This is a way to remember that the travelers, the "wise men" of Matthew's nativity narrative, were outsiders who were welcomed into the Good News, just as we are welcomed by the Lord Jesus. What better way to be surrounded by God's love than by a blessing upon your home? Use the slip, or call the office to make your request. The Pastor will call and set up the day and time with you.

Yes, I'd like Pastor Elkin to call and arrange to stop briefly at my home for a house blessing sometime during the Epiphany season, following the tradition of the eastern churches.