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HEAVEN'S

SAKE~

Volume 16 Issue 11

December 2023

The Pastor's Pen - December 2023

Dear Church Family,

It seems really hard to believe that we are already at our first Christmas season together; I kind of feel like I just got here last week. These months have been a joy for me, as I've clearly been able to see not only how important your church is to you, but that you're generally pretty willing to step up and do what needs to be done for your church. And I've honestly been very impressed with all of the ways that you work at being the church, especially in a time when Presbyterian and other Mainline denominations are not sure about what the future holds for them. On top of that, you know your community, and your community knows you; and that right there is not something that a lot of churches today can say about themselves.

One of my professors in seminary told us that you know a church's viability by what would change for its neighborhood if it were no longer there. I think we all know the very important role WMPC plays in the greater community. WMPC really is a place where the community gathers.

Many people, however, don't realize all of the moving parts that need to work together to ensure that the church can function properly. You are the seventh church that I am serving, so I've seen what's out there to at least a certain extent, and I can tell you that West Milford Presbyterian has some of the best potential that I've seen so far. And, I've found not only a willingness to explore the faith, but almost an eagerness in some, and for me, that's exciting. The questions that you're all asking that are acting as the basis of our sermons for the last few months show me that.

And now we get to experience Christmas together. Over the course of this Advent, we're going to be looking at the prophecies of Isaiah that speak of the meaning of Advent to us. The first Sunday will see us focus on the meaning of the season with Isaiah calling for God to come to us. Isaiah was inviting God to come into our lives in a new and meaningful way, while knowing that we really don't deserve it.

I know that in today's world it can be difficult to see the meaning of this season. Christmas has become the world's most celebrated holiday, with even other faith traditions celebrating it, but for them the meaning behind celebrating Christ's birth has been sidelined for the Santa Claus version of the celebration, which is right where most of us are in our country as well. And don't get me wrong, there's something very nice about the décor and playing into the excitement of the holiday, but if only we could truly understand how the birth of Christ literally changed humanity for the rest of history for all people on earth.

Together, we'll prayerfully get there.

Be Good & Do Good,

Pastor Chris

A Special Request From Pastor Chris

Dear Church Family,

I thought I would make a separate note for the newsletter to address a concern I have. In my Pastor's letter, I remarked how impressed I have been with how so many of you do stand up and take responsibility for your church, and truly, I do see this at WMPC more than at any of the other churches that I've served. However, we do have something of an issue that needs to be tackled, and it's one that affects us all.

Currently, WMPC has a five-person session, with two of those elders finishing their terms at the end of the year, which leaves three. One elder has agreed to come onto session, that brings us up to four. This is an issue, because a church the size of WMPC really needs to have a nine-person session to function properly. Without that, we'll have a lot of things that need to happen, not happen. Meaning, because of the lack of elders on session, the tasks to get covered by a session member are limited to ones that are considered the most practically essential. That means that there is not an elder that might work specifically on Outreach, which is vital. Likewise, there isn't an elder for Christian Education, which really is another vital role. And yes, the church does outreach and Christian Education anyway, but when there's an elder on session representing either one of those causes to session, not only does the leadership feel more connected, but the church as a whole can function better; and if you want to grow as a church, then you need to function well.

Now I know that being on session has often been a role that people take and later regret. Meetings are known to go long, arguments have been known to happen, people's feelings have gotten hurt and the end result is a commitment to 'Never Again'. However, if this be the feeling, I can assure you that that is not the way it is any longer. When I first got to South Jersey, it was a struggle to get people to agree to be on session for the same reasons that we all know. But a couple years in, being on session was not the task for folks that it had once seemed to be. Also, when I arrived in Oak Ridge, there was a six-person session, and I can honestly tell you, that it was at times very frustrating for various reasons. But today, Oak Ridge has a nine-member session with elders letting me know that they'd be fine to come back onto session when their terms expire. When we work together with a sense being a team and being treated as the leadership of the church by each other, the dynamic shifts and the burden lifts.

If you feel yourself willing to take a dive onto session, let's have a talk. If you want to just give it a try to see if it's as horrible as folks have known, come onto session for just a year. After a year, if you find that it's something that you really don't feel you want to do for your church, that's fine, but you'll at least have given being on session with me as your pastor a try. Right now, we need elders to work with me on Worship, an elder for Christian Education, someone to be the go to person for Fellowship, an elder for Outreach, and another elder for Membership. All of these positions are essential to running a church that will grow into the future, now, perhaps more than ever.

Be Good & Do Good,

Pastor Chris

Joy's & Concerns

- *Pam-her nephew Chris fell out of bed. Her sister is having hard time.
- *Joyce's husband had a biopsy, praying for good news.
- *Bobbie- sons friend in Texas fell out of the attic and has multiple fractures
- *Annette- a friend in NY state told she has 6 months to live
- *Karen's friend is having a second knee done
- *Prayers for our world.
- *Bill Connolly's sister, Mary, fell and broke her hip. Needs encouraging prayers for recovery.
- *Myrtle- Her friend Ruth is back in the hospital and needs our prayers.
- *Jan- Evan's issue at school has been resolved and he is back to his old self.
- *Natalie- Her uncle Rod will be having back surgery the Monday after Thanksgiving. He is in a lot of pain.
- *Jan Halverson's cousin, Jean, passed away. Prayers for her husband and family.
- *Ruth's grandson, Daniel is engaged. The proposal was in Hawaii.
- *Prayers for Bonnie Seufert who fell and broke her foot and needed surgery.

 She sprained the other foot. Prayers for Nurse Howie.
- *Congratulations to Steve Holley as he takes over the position of scoutmaster for his son's Boy Scout troop. Steve was a part of our own Troop 44 and it is good to see that tradition is carried on.
- *Prayers for Carol Stanhope as she grieves for her friend of 40 years, Radah. Prayers for her husband and son as they grieve.

JOYS:

- *Thanks to our Veterans for their service.
- *Pastor Chris gave thanks for having the opportunity to do his presentation on the history of the Middle East and Israel and how the area has evolved to its present state.
- *Sarah Gibson is home from college for the Thanksgiving week-end.
- *Ken is happy to have family from W Virginia here to help celebrate 60th anniversary.
- *Sandy- thanks to everyone for the prayers, calls, and texts for Jean
- *John and Nancy Wilkens are celebrating their 59th wedding anniversary.
- *Pastor Chris and Hala are celebrating their 29th wedding anniversary.
- *Marty- joy for the beautiful altar table. Seeing the choir in their robes and Singing and leading us in our hymns and all the people in church.
- * Bonnie- thanks for the help with the pantry donations. Thanks for the bakers for the Sweet Stop.
- *Rich -Scouts will be raking today at 1PM
- *Karen Shumpert-Such a joy to see her church family.
- *Joy for gathering together with our families for Thanksgiving.
- *Kathi Enering's mother, Jane, is celebrating her 92nd birthday.



SESSION'S REFLECTIONS

DECEMBER 2023 SUBMITTED BY BETSY ENGELHARDT, CLERK OF SESSION

November's Session meeting started with a guest speaker from Northeast Region Presbyterian Foundation. Rose Niles is eager to help us organize a program for legacy giving from our congregation. Our hope is to educate members on the importance of remembering our church in their wills and yearly planned giving so that the legacy of work performed by generations past can be carried through to generations going forward. You'll be hearing more on this subject throughout the new year.

Don Wright had much to report on property. Quotes for replacing the ceiling tiles throughout areas on the second story of Fellowship Hall are running high. More work is being done to determine a more affordable solution. The source of our backed-up sewer lines was discovered to be a disconnected pipe leading to the septic field. P & W came to our rescue and properly aligned and connected the pipe just in time for the Christmas Bazaar crowds. Public service is providing free Wi-Fi enabled thermostats for Fellowship Hall which will allow us to raise and lower the heat in the building remotely. We are grateful for Don serving as our videographer for our weekly worship services. Many don't realize the hours he spends editing and posting these services onto social media sites. We are hopeful our grant money from Presbytery will provide more efficient methods and free Don of these labor-intensive manipulations. Pastor Chris helped coordinate the rental of a color copier which will bring the cost of printing colored copies from 40 to 60 cents per copy down to 8 cents per copy. Our rental contract will include toner supplies and maintenance.

Worship services throughout advent have been planned. Session all agreed we need the choir voices back in our choir loft. Pastor Chris will work on music selections for their return. Children's Christmas pageant is planned for Sunday, December 17. There will be normal Sunday worship at 9AM on December 24 along with Christmas Eve services planned for 7PM at Oak Ridge and 9PM at West Milford. Since December has 5 Sundays, December 31 will be a joint service with Oak Ridge, held at West Milford's sanctuary at 10AM. A special thanks to those that helped support the mailing expenses for the Christmas Shoe Box mission project—we were able to collect \$350 towards this great cause.

For those that attended worship on November 19, you heard Pastor Chris' plea for members to commit to at least ONE YEAR of service as an Elder starting January 2024. Currently, the Nominating Committee has secured commitments from only 4 Elders to serve in the new year. We need 9 Elders to adequately manage the work of the church. If you receive a call from Pastor Chris, please speak with God and ask his guidance on how you can use your gift and talents to keep our ministry active and vibrant. Pastor Chris has proven a great moderator of our monthly Session meetings, moving them along swiftly, all while listening, supporting, and guiding our work in a calm and fun environment. Come take a front row seat to church management for at least one year — I believe the rewards for your work will exceed your expectations.



SUNDAY WORSHOP OPPORTUNITIES DURING ADVENT

Throughout the month of December, we celebrate Advent – anticipating the coming of Christ by lighting one Advent Candle each week.

DECEMBER 3 – We light the purple <u>PROPHECY</u> candle symbolizing <u>HOPE</u>, reminding us that Jesus is coming and he will lead us into salvation. The sanctuary is brightly decorated with garlands, candles, Christmas trees and lights.

DECEMBER 10 – We light the purple <u>BETHLEHEM</u> candle representing Mary & Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. We reflect on God's promise of universal <u>PEACE</u> through Christ.

DECEMBER 17 – We light the pink <u>SHEPARD'S</u> candle with <u>JOY</u> at the coming of Christ. CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGAENT SCHEDULED FOR THIS SERVICE.

DECEMBER 24 – We light the white $\underline{\textit{ANGEL'S}}$ candle symbolizing Christ's $\underline{\textit{LOVE}}$ for us all & our love for our neighbors.

9 AM SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

7 PM CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE HOSTED AT OAK RIDGE PRESBYTERIAN

9 PM CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE HOSTED AT WEST MILFORD PRESBYTERIAN

DECEMBER 31 – A joint service to include Oak Ridge's congregation will be hosted at West Milford at 10 AM to celebrate the end to one year and the excitement for the possibilities in the new year to come.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST & ON EARTH PEACE AMONG US!



SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES

We all have busy lives, hectic schedules, things to do, people to see, places to go.

We are hopeful our church offers a special time each week to disconnect,
unwind, reflect, commune with members, enjoy live music, sing your heart out if
the spirit moves you, share your joys & concerns, be inspired by our pastor's
messaging, enjoy fresh brewed coffee & sweet confections, and so much more.
So you can plan your Sundays, expect on average our worship service to last

FROM 9 AM TO 10:15 AM COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWING IN FELLOWSHIP HALL

NOTE: Times may change with advance notice and occasional elements to worship that are special may have service lasting longer on a given day.

WA News

Our Christmas Bazaar was a success and we want to thank everyone that helped. We couldn't do any of what we do if it wasn't for you.

We will once again be collecting money to purchase gift cards for township children. Social workers distribute them to families that need them and parents can get what their child really wants. We have been doing this for a number of years along with the deacons. Look for us at coffee hour.

We want to wish everyone a very blessed Christmas.

Blessings, Linda and Pam



Deacons Doings December, 2023

The month of December is a very special and busy month for Deacons.

The annual Christmas Bizarre announced the beginning of the holiday season. Deacons had their Deacon's Café. We sold lunch specials to patrons and venders and reacquainted with our annual friends.

December will begin with Deacons and friends decorating the sanctuary for the Advent season. Since the first Sunday of Advent is also Communion Sunday, the alter will be set for the communion service, an appropriate way to begin the Advent season.

We will serve communion by the intinction method and have two people serving wine and two serving the communion bread.

During the Advent season Deacons will be selling poinsettias. They will become a part of the Christmas Day and eve service. They can be then taken home to add to your holiday decoration. Try growing them for the next season. That is possible and has been done. (Personal note.)

As has been our custom for many years, our church will be collecting money for gift cards to be distributed by a social worker to families to help them purchase toys for their children. The money will be turned into gift cards. Last year, our congregation, Session, and Deacons, together, collected \$1,000.

Linda, a Deacon, purchased wreaths to decorate the doors of the sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, entrance to office, and Aunt Jenny's Attic. Do you know that there are 11 doors on the church property?

Again, batteries for candles will be checked for the Christmas Eve service and luminaria that will line the path to the Christmas Eve service.

Food Pantry

The food pantry coordinator is Bonnie Seufert.

Complete Thanksgiving Dinners were distributed to about 30 pantry families. Although they are anonymous, we do hear glimpses of their stories. They are truly grateful for our help. By giving out complete dinners instead of serving dinners at the church, they will have meals for several days.

We will be serving Christmas dinners to those families who request them.

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have been made possible by the many donations of individuals and group collections, such as in the lake communities. A special thanks goes to our own Shop-Rite that made a huge donation. The Sheriff's Department contributed many turkeys.

Again, our congregation is small, but our hearts are huge. Only a few members are Deacons and Session members, Senior Saints, and Aunt Jenny's Attic crew. Our congregation always pulls together. Decorations are up, food is baked for repasts, and donations are made. It will be a joyous Christmas Season.

Marty Tappan

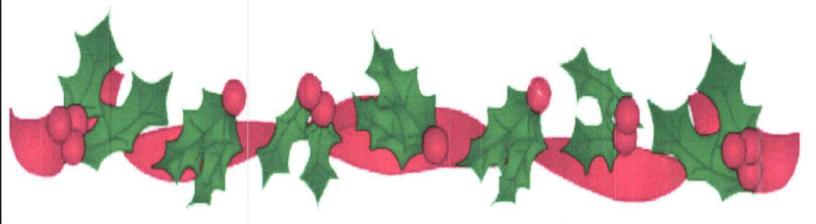
Deacon Moderator



Thank you so much for all you did to help families in our community provide a Thanksgiving meal for their loved ones. Between your help with donations both monetary and with food items, some local food drives, food drives in Cosmo's and Shoprite, and Shoprite donating a large quantity of food on our Thanksgiving menu, 30 families enjoyed all it took to bring a turkey dinner to their table.

In December, the pantry will once again need your help for Christmas dinners. Jan Halvorsen found a wonderful way of collecting items through a Reverse Advent Calendar. We'll let her explain it and if you like the idea, you can join in. Maybe even the children can get involved and feel the satisfaction of knowing they helped their community.

With our whole hearts we wish you all a Christmas season of great joy and love and a New Year of health and happiness. From the Pantry Team



REVERSE

ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO THE BAG. BEFORE, AFTER, OR AT THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE, DONATE THE BAG TO OUR FOOD PANTRY.

December 1 – box of cereal December 13 - oatmeal

December 2 – peanut butter December 14 – box of pasta

December 3 – brownie mix December 15 – spaghetti sauce

December 4 - boxed potatoes December 16 - chicken noodle soup

December 5 – canned chicken December 17 – tomato soup

December 6 – canned fruit December 18 – can of corn

December 7 – canned tomatoes December 19 – hot chocolate mix

December 8 – canned tuna December 20 – can of carrots

December 9 – cookie mix December 21 – can of green beans

December 10 – jar of applesauce December 22 – box of crackers

December 11 – tomato paste December 23 – package of rice

December 12 – can of pet food December 24 – canned beans

CHOOSE ANYWAY YOU ARE MOST COMFORTABLE WITH.

PERRHAPS ONE OR TWO ITEMS A WEEK OR SHARING THE ITEMS

WITH A FRIEND OR ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION 2023-2024 December 2023

November seemed to fly by as we celebrated our many Thanksgiving blessings. The children learned to trust God for protection through the story of David and Goliath. They were quite astounded to see the size of Goliath via a life size drawing of him in their Sunday School class. (Thank you Miss Dale). They learned how God is all powerful as they heard the story of the three men and the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:10-11). Lastly, they were introduced to the prophet, Isaiah, who led the way to the advent season.



The children have a very busy season planned for Sunday School this month! They will be learning about the prophet Isaiah (9:6) and the promise of a Savior. The Sunday School kids will

remain in the church service for week of advent. Then, the children advent candle lighting and School class after experiencing it in will then enjoy all the wonders of Luke 1:29-30, and Luke 2:6-7,

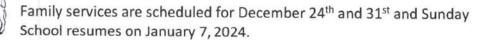


the Pastor's sermon this first will be having their own instruction in their Sunday the sanctuary. The children Jesus' birth with readings of accompanied by the weekly

discussions/understandings of the lighting of their advent candles.

The highlight of December will be the Sunday School Christmas Pageant in the sanctuary on

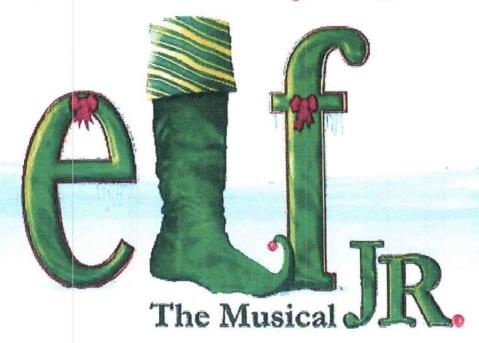
December 17, an activity which touches all our hearts with wonder, joy, and warm memories! Rehearsal for the pageant will be on Saturday, December 16 at 9:00am, ending with hot chocolate and donuts. Please have your children in attendance.







The West Milford Players present:



Based on the beloved holiday film, this bilarious fish-out-of-water comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity.

December 1, 2, 8 and 9 at 7:30pm December 2 and 9 at 2:00pm

Tickets: \$20.00 adults - \$18.00 seniors/students
Advanced tickets strongly suggested: www.wmplayers.org

All Performances at

The West Milford Presbyterian Church 1452 Union Valley Road, West Milford, NJ

Questions: 973-697-4400

The West Milford Players present



SHOW DATES

Friday, December 15th at 7:30 pm Saturday, December 16th at 7:30 pm Sunday, December 17th at 2:00 pm

Saturday Ugly Sweater Contest

PERFORMED AT

West Milford Presbyterian Church 1452 Union Valley Road, West Milford

• TICKETS •

\$10.00

To purchase tickets, please go to: www.thewestmilfordplayers.org



Game

Please feel free to bring a new unwrapped toy for the West Milford Presbyterian Church Community Toy Drive



in Concert



Saturday, January 6th 7:00 PM

Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church 342 Oak Ridge Road, Oak Ridge, NJ

Funding has been made available in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through the State/County Partnership Block Grant Program, as administered through the Sussex County Arts and Heritage Council.

N

11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

5:30pm - WM Players

12pm - WM Players

9am - Community Food Pantry 9am - Sr. Saints

11am - Bible Study @ WMPC

9am - Community Food Pantry

9am - Worship

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6pm - Scouts

1pm - Aunt Jenny's Attic

11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

5:30pm - WM Players

9am - Community Food Pantry 11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

12pm - WM Players

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

14

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3pm - Wild Players 7:30pm - Session

9am - Worship

6pm - Scouts

11am - Bible Study @ WMPC

9am - Community Food Pantry

5:30pm - WM Players

7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study

1pm - Aunt Jenny's Attic

5:30pm - WM Players

9em - Community Food Pantry

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11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

12pm - Hepp Wedding

11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

5:30pm - Will Players

5:30pm - WM Players

9am - 8r, Saints

5:30pm - WM Players

9am - Community Food Pantry 11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

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9am - Christmas Food Pick-Up

9am - Christmas Food Pick-Up 9am - Community Food Paritry

9am · Christmas Food Pick-Up 7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study

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11am - Bible Study @ WMPC

1pm - Aunt Jenny's Attic

11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

9am - Community Food Pantry

9am - Sr. Saints

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11am - Aunt Jenny's Attic

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6pm - Christmas Food Bagging

12pm - WM Players

6pm - Scouts

9am - Worship

7pm - Christmas Eve Service @

9am - Worship

6pm - Scouts

9pm - Christmas Eve Service

11am - Bible Study @ WMPC

9am - Community Food Pantry

1pm - Aunt Jenny's Attlc

9am - Community Food Pantry

10pm - Chelsea Service

9am - Sr. Saints

9am - Worship 6pm - Scouts

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