

The Pastor's Pen - June 2023

Dear One & All,

Greetings and blessings! Well, here we are at the start of a new month and a new summer season and all of the things that go along with it. I know that for myself, I have really been looking forward to being able to get outside with temperatures on the rise and days a little longer with sun light.

When I was growing up in the Catskills of Upstate New York, the summer-time with no school always meant that we'd be told to get outside and go play by 10 am. We often wouldn't show up back home until just before dinner would be waiting for us, that is of course, unless we'd fallen into a creek and had to change clothes, needed to stop in for a quick bite to eat, or had somehow gotten hurt or in a fight with the other kids of the neighborhood. We would build forts, play baseball, go berry picking, explore the woods that went deep, go fishing, or my favorite pastime; racing down one of the local creeks pieces of 2 X 4's that we had cut with one end pointed and a nail through part of one side to hold a small flag that we'd creatively come up with.

Of course, the church was a part of our childhood pictures as well. And whereas we may have just been learning some of the basic stories of the bible that didn't really seem to speak to our realities, through them we did learn about kindness and empathy, and the difference between right and wrong. In many ways, it was an ideal childhood, but probably the most important lesson that was gained from such an experience, was the lesson that we can do so much more when we work together. Think about it; throwing a baseball up in the air and catching it was good for a bit, but an actual game was always so much more fun, building a fort was always great, but if you were doing it in a group, the experience would be so much more memorable, and that goes also for all of the other things we would come up with to do.

I can assume probably correctly that many of us had such experiences growing up before cable and video games seemed to take over. But then we did grow-up and get jobs and go on dates, eventually starting families of our own and moving into the universe of adulthood. We also, for most of us probably, then didn't have time to hang out with friends so much and do things like build forts and race pieces of wood down creeks. Life just became too busy, with that busyness then also helping us to make the decision to make church less of a priority. Certainly, part of that would be the thought that the church didn't

really have much of an impact on our lives. Some of us returned, if we hadn't left, and were able to develop a different relationship with the church, but we still had to deal with the busyness that always seemed to exhaust us.

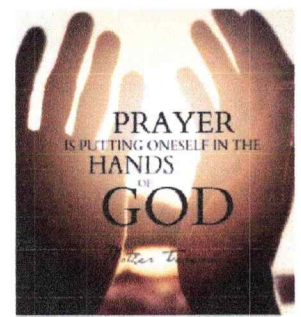
What I would like to propose here is that we can't forget about that basic lesson that we learned growing up about the importance of being able to experience more out of our lives when we work together. Yes, that does mean sometimes having a willingness to sacrifice something, whether it mean time or talents, but imagine what we can do when we all get together. I do believe that every single one of us has gifts to bring to the communion table, and that when we decide that together we can make a difference, that the church will become revitalized in spirit, and in community. Part of that is also caring for our own spiritual health so that we can lead by real example.

I also believe that our churches are at an important juncture in our society. I know that people are hungry for spiritual health, and I know that the far majority of folks in our communities believe in God. For most, their problem isn't with God, but rather with the church, for whatever reason they may express. It's up to all of us of the church to really show our neighbors why the church can be good and worthy of their willingness to engage. Invite your friends, family and neighbors to church services and events, you may just be surprised by an acceptance of your invitation. Tell them that a new day at West Milford Presbyterian Church is upon us and that it'll be refreshing to be a part of, and we know this, because God does always have a plan.

Be Good & Do Good,

Pastor Chris

Joys & Concerns



JOYS:

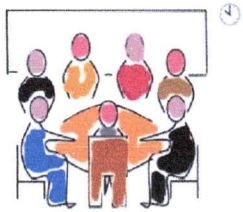
- * Myrtle: happy to have celebrated granddaughter, Abby's graduation from college.
- * Pastor Chris and his wife are celebrating 28th wedding anniversary.
- * Lee is happy for his music trio.
- * Marty was glad to see the congregation at the 9 AM service. Thanks to the choir for Spirit of Gentleness.

Concerns:

- * Prayers for Chris Meyers Pam's nephew
- * Kathy Holley's brother, Kyle, is in hospital with a blood clot. Prayers for him
- * Judy Mazur in Valley Hospital
- * Cyndy Taylor: Prayers for Rob. Attempted suicide. Prayers to heal.
- * Fran Ehrhardt was in the hospital. Now home.
- * Mary Micheska: Neighbors was in a serious accident. He has serious injuries. Father-in-law has bone cancer.
- * Julia Held is home, facing decisions on the future—prayers for her health and comfort.



Please let the Office know if you have Prayer Concerns or Joys!



SESSION'S REFLECTIONS

JUNE 2023

SUBMITTED BY BETSY ENGELHARDT, CLERK OF SESSION

Our May Session meeting started with a presentation by Eagle Scout Candidate Russell Fleming. Russell has been a long-time member of our church. As pointed out by Linda Fredricksen, Russell would always bring his own copy of his bible to Sunday School. His Eagle Scout project will include the painting of the Wm. Association shed, installing a solar motion sensor light, and pouring a continuous concrete pad to accommodate our two garbage dumpsters. It was a pleasure to spend a short period of our meeting time with this dedicated Scout.

Session approved honoring Sarah Gibson with the Darlene Witham Scholarship. With the generous help of the Wm. Association and general church funds, Sarah will be awarded \$750. She has been an active member of the church, helping with Christian Ed, VBS, and various fundraisers throughout the years. We will look forward to June 11 as our church school promotion service and teacher's appreciation day. Although it was recommended Vacation Bible School be delayed one more year, Pastor Chris described a traveling VBS program offered by Camp Johnsonburg. This program can be scheduled to come to our door, complete with staff, lunch & snacks. Since there is a cost and some labor is requested from our church, the Christian Ed committee will be asked to research further – if not for this year, then maybe next year.

Property reported the roof has sprung new leaks – this is no longer a project we can put on hold. Quotes are running over \$30,000. There are an additional 28 windows throughout Fellowship Hall and its second floor that require replacement, with quotes running over \$32,000. Finance Committee will review Pastor Chris' Terms of Call to determine if they can release the Wm. Association from their commitment to safeguard close to \$80,000 for pastoral benefits. The benefit of hiring a shared pastor is cutting our benefit expenses in half. The women are always generous in seeing the financial needs of our church are covered. Additional quotes will be sought and further discussions on funds will take place before scheduling these expensive repair projects.

Kit Rusinack worked hard in coordinating the projects with Faith in Action scheduled for Sunday, May 21. Our food pantry benefited from food collection sites set up that day at grocery stores in West Milford and Oak Ridge. Connections were also made with Bethel Ranch during this event to forward overstocked food to our pantry.

Since our meeting date, the Clerk of Session received a resignation message from Deacon's Moderator, Jan Halvorsen, effective May 31. She has been a hard-working Deacon with years of dedicated service and cares deeply for our church. We thank her for her hours of labor ensuring the "behind the scenes" work performed weekly by the Deacons continues seamlessly. We wish her God's blessings going forward.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

April & May



April began children's instruction with our Palm Sunday Family Service at which time the children handed out palms to our congregation. They received booklets that helped them understand Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Ms. Dale and Ms. Kathi organized an "egg-citing" Easter Egg Hunt for the children which all enjoyed. Thank you to our teachers for all your efforts to make "the hunt" and Sunday School such fun for our children! The children learned about the resurrection and why Jesus is known as our Lord and Savior. They learned how Jesus appeared to his disciples after His Death, and how "Doubting Thomas" and others became believers at the sight of Him. The children also learned about

HE IS
Risen

several parables Jesus had shared with his followers and recognized Him as our Good Shepherd through Bible verses and the 23rd Psalm. With the help of Marty Tappan and the teachers, our children participated in Levite Sunday by planting pansies to decorate the church grounds and gardens. The CE committee also served lunch to

our workers, generously funded by the Women's Association. Once again, our children enjoyed the Blessings of Easter and God's Love for us all.

In May, the children have learned how Jesus reassured his followers that by believing in Him, a place in heaven will be prepared for them by Jesus and that He will always be with them.

"There are many rooms in my Father's house and I am going to prepare a place for you." Jesus explains, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one goes to the father except by me." Jesus further explains that God will send the Holy Spirit that will stay with his followers always.....

Jesus' followers will never be alone. Jesus' followers were no longer afraid to be without him. Just as the disciples learned that Jesus was always with them via the Holy Spirit, our children learned that the Holy Spirit, sent by God, is within them, will support them, give them strength to conquer their fears and troubles, and make them brave. The Holy Spirit brings God's love to them all. Jesus has prepared all his believers to continue to be believers when He is no longer on earth, and so the children learned about His ascension into heaven. Jesus has taken care of

his followers and is now ready to join His father, God, in heaven. All of Jesus' assurances and actions strengthened his followers' faith and, as with his early followers, have given our children the strength and courage to continue following in Jesus' way. Thus, our children learned about Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent by God to all of us and His Church is born.



The Darlene Witham Scholarship applications were due by mid-May. The award, provided by Session and the Women's Association, will be given out on June 11 during the Children's Day promotion program, and will be presented at the high school awards program.

The church picnic will be held on this same Sunday in celebration of our children. Since our service is now earlier, we will put together a brunch for everyone and gather outside for fellowship and fun. There is a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall for those in the congregation who would like to contribute to the menu.



**June 23rd, 24th,
& 25th**

Friday & Saturday

9-4

Sunday 11-3

**Please come anytime during the
month of June to help All day,
a few hours any help is WELCOME!**



Bringing Generation X Back To The Church & Why It Matters

As a second career Gen X pastor in the PCUSA, I've found myself asking, "Where are all of the people of my age group?" Most of Generation X grew-up in the church as I, but most left the church when we were teenagers or in our twenties. Even though the church was the place that we learned about community and the importance of community, as well as empathy and caring for those who had less than we, our problem was that the church never seemed to address our questions about life in a way that spoke to us and going to church for the sake of going to church was no longer good enough.

Today, the situation of Generation X and the church has turned into a tragic story, but it's not too late to do some relationship repair. Most Gen Xers are no longer running after toddlers or playing chauffeur to our children, we're thinking about our purpose in life and if we've achieved or exceeded the expectations we had when we were younger, and what's more, we're thinking about mortality. We're also at that place in our lives in which we can consider doing some good with our excesses if we have them.

As it turns out, Generation X today is spiritually hungry, but the problem is that we've essentially lost the thought that the church is a place we can turn to, and all because we weren't given the understandings we needed when growing-up. As a result, many have come to see Generation X as a lost generation to the church. Church became a part of our past and we preferred to leave it there for one reason or another.

However, as I mentioned above, I don't believe that it's too late for the church to reach out and invite Generation X back, many are just waiting to feel like they're wanted. Therefore, conversations about Generation X and it being the lost generation to the church need to be had. Generation X grew-up in the church in a way that truly formed us, for good or for bad, and it can be the answer to so many of our questions today, but the church needs to act, not just for the future of Gen Xers, but the future of the church.

I don't put forth that Generation X is the answer to all of the church's problems, but new perspectives and viewpoints have always helped to bring back to life something that seemed to be dying. Generation X could play a pivotal role if the hand of the church is extended to them in a meaningful way.

For my DMin. Degree, this was my focus, and the hoped for focus of conversations to be had. My dissertation is now available to the public and can hopefully be a starting place.

Link to the book: <https://www.westbowpress.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/840093-responding-faithfully-to-generation-x>



Public Announcement From Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church

Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church at 321 Oak Ridge Road (our Parish House just down the street from the church) in Oak Ridge is inviting our community and beyond to a Saturday afternoon worship service at 5 PM starting June 3rd. This will not be your regular service, but instead a time of reflection, conversation and fellowship. There will be some traditional Presbyterian elements to the service, but we'll also be introducing some new ways to be the church that gathers around something bigger than ourselves.

All ages are welcome and encouraged to experience a new kind of church.





June							Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
							30	31	1	2	3
							First Day of LGBTQ+ Pride 9am - Community Food 9am - Sr. Saints 10pm - Chelsea Service				
9am - Sunday School 9am - Worship 10am - Congregational 6pm - Scouts	Office Closed					9am - Community Food 3pm - Farmers Market	9am - Community Food 9am - Sr. Saints 10pm - Chelsea Service	9am - Community Food			
9am - Sunday School 9am - Worship 3pm - Pfy Rectal 6pm - Scouts	7:30pm - Session	9am - Community Food	Flag Day 3pm - Farmers Market		NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 9am - Community Food 9am - Sr. Saints 10pm - Chelsea Service	9am - Community Food					
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