

Dear One & All,

Greetings in the name and peace of Jesus Christ! I would like to start by saying how excited I am to be joining your church family. I've been in the area for a little over six years now working with the Oak Ridge and Berkshire Valley churches, so I know the area and how to find my way around for the most part, although sometimes I do still get lost. One of the reasons why I'm excited is because I do believe, after my time with them, that Oak Ridge and West Milford are a great match for sharing leadership. Both congregations seem to me to have a shared vision for how to spread the Gospel, and both congregations know each other from within and outside of church functions. This element is actually pretty important in this effort and includes things from knowing the same stores and resources, to having very similar theological outlooks.

Most of you know that I worked in overseas missions in the Middle East for several years before feeling a call to parish ministry. And you know that part of that time was with PCUSA where I worked in development. But what you don't know about this, is that my specific job with PCUSA was the building of networks of grassroots organizations, meaning organizations that have sprung up from the communities themselves. I would visit with them, see the work that they're doing and then perhaps invite them to be a part of the network that named itself 'Together For Family Development'. My job was to be there as their moderating facilitator and to be sure that the plans made came into fruition.

What they together decided to focus their combined efforts on was a program of government lobbying that would lobby for the rights and needs of those with physical disabilities. Egypt is known for having a large population with such challenges, and is also unfortunately known for having no policies, services or public facilities that take into account such needs. It would be nothing to see a person driving a wheelchair in the middle of the street going on their way, because there were no ramps to the sidewalks. Boy do I have stories! Those were exciting years living in the land where so much of our human story originates from, but I'll also say that ministry here in the US can be just as exciting.

In 2003, we had been speaking about our work at a church in Michigan. A woman who was a member of the church asked me if I would ever consider coming back to the US to work in ministry, she declared that the US was the next big mission field that needed to be taken seriously. I didn't really have an answer for her at that time, but I can say now that that is how I typically view what it is that I do. I've been ordained and educated in ministry to a specific role, but what I basically see myself as is a missionary; going and working where it is that God calls me to. I believe that my call to you is real.

Over the period of time that God wants me to be with you, I know that we'll get to know each other well. You'll hear my stories about growing up in the Catskills, about my travels as an undergrad and then finally settling down for a while in the Palestinian Territories, getting married and starting a family, our dogs and a whole host of other things. I give you this heads-up because I'd also like to hear your stories. What makes you the community you are? What are the gifts that we all bring to the communion table? What are the backgrounds that we bring to that table, and then how do we use all of that to spread the Gospel and truly be the hands and feet of Christ?

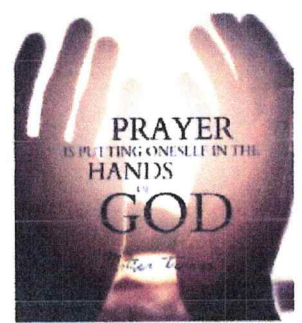
It takes conversation, and a sense of loving openness with a healthy lack of critique, a willingness to learn how the Scriptures can help us to decipher the answers to these questions, and a bravery to practice what we preach. I am looking forward to getting to know you individually and communally and walking together on this leg of our collective journey. Please just call me Chris, and please don't call me "Reverend"; our reverence only goes to one place. But I like my name. I was born on August 16, 1969, the famous weekend of the Woodstock Concert - in the hospital, not at the concert though -, but then also on that day Pope Paul declared that St. Christopher's holy day would no longer be celebrated because St. Christopher was deemed to be a story with no proof, essentially a piece of folklore. My mother, a very good Roman Catholic, with perhaps a somewhat harsh sense of spite for Pope Paul, then named me Christopher. St. Christopher is the patron saint of travelers and means "carrier of Christ". Together we are all travelers. I invite you to find out with me what it means to be a Christopher, and perhaps we'll all soon become spiritual Christophers.

And always remember what Paul said to the Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That goes for each and everyone of us as well.

In Christ's Service,  
Pastor Chris



# Joys & Concerns



## JOYS:

- \*Pastor Roger's oldest granddaughter, Emma, was 8 on April 1st, April Fool's Day
- \*Audrey had a visit from a cousin whom she hadn't seen in 7 years.
- \*Julia will be driving to Baltimore for Easter weekend. Safe trip
- \*We have a visitor originally from Kenya. We welcome Judith.
- \*Mel Gibson and husband are celebrating their 35th wedding anniversary. He is celebrating 10 years of life after a kidney transplant.....
- \*Wesley Pierce..Grateful to be alive after seizure. Was air lifted to hospital, medically induced coma. One week later, he is fine.
- \*Cyndy....Thanks for Jane's very interesting journey sermon.

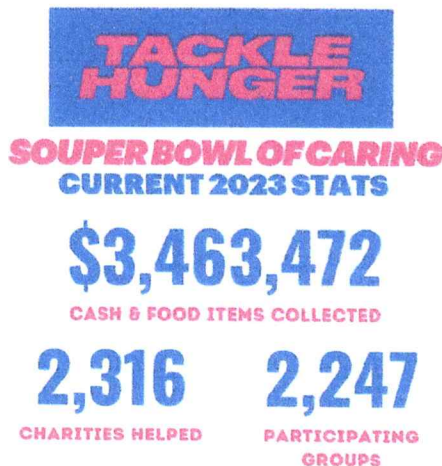


## Concerns:

- \*Rich Hepp is asking for prayers for safe surgery for Irene, quick recovery.
- \*Barbara and John Vrsecky....Prayers for a successful surgery on John this coming week

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## The 2023 Stats So Far...



The Souper Bowl of Caring event may be over, but you can still Tackle Hunger every day.

Thank you to all of the participants for making the Souper Bowl of Caring event a success!

We encourage everyone to report their collections to add to the national impact.

Your collection information helps us make an even bigger difference in the future. You can email your collection report to [reports@tacklehunger.org](mailto:reports@tacklehunger.org) or call 800.358.SOUP(7687).



# SESSION'S REFLECTIONS

MAY 2023

SUBMITTED BY BETSY ENGELHARDT, CLERK OF SESSION

First and foremost, Session would like to thank Pastor Jean Holmes for moderating our Session meetings since December 2022 when Pastor Justin resigned. It's been a pleasure to get to know her these past 5 months. Her guidance, knowledge, and sweet demeanor were welcomed at every meeting. It was her joy to participate in our congregational meeting that brought forth the new pastor to see us through the months and years ahead. She is confident we are in good hands and will continue to pray for us.

Jan Halvorsen joined the April meeting to discuss future plans for serving communion. Session voted to return to serving bread and juice through intinction, with a platter of the pre-packaged communion cups available for those that may remain uncomfortable with communal hosting. Intinction serves the host dipped into one goblet at the front of the sanctuary rather distributing individual cups at the pews. There is a shortage of volunteers available for preparing the juice prior to service and cleanup of individual cups following service.

Don Wright reported that the power washing of the sanctuary and fellowship hall has been completed. Russell Fleming has submitted his Eagle Scout project plans which includes the painting of the Thrift Shop shed and pouring 2 concrete slabs for the church dumpsters.

Plans are underway for preparing the start of Pastor Chris' service to our church in May. A letter to be forwarded to everyone in our membership and friends data base was approved announcing the first joint worship service on May 7. Oak Ridge Presbyterian voted to attend this worship scheduled for 10 AM. A welcome station will be set up during coffee hour following service to help orient Oak Ridge members to what West Milford has to offer in this shared relationship. Pastor Chris' office hours in West Milford will be posted as Wednesday and Thursday each week from 10 AM to 4 PM – pending any pastoral needs that might take him away during this time. He is available by cell phone (1-856-345-3261) all other days. It was suggested that West Milford Messenger be contacted to publish a feature article announcing the shared relationship with Oak Ridge and to let the community know there is a new pastor in town. George Stoft will be working with Pastor Chris on determining an in-house Bible Study date and time each week. Look for details to be forthcoming.

Kit Rusinack is working with the Faith in Action committee to determine what role WMPC can serve in this event scheduled for Sunday, May 21. If you are interested in lending a hand for this wonderful outreach effort, please reach out to Kit.

***REMINDER: Effective Sunday, May 14, Sunday worship service and church school will take place at 9 AM and will remain so unless advised otherwise. This is a change from our practice of worshipping at 10 AM.***



# WA May 2023

The beautiful month of May. So nice to see all the trees and flowers blooming again. It also means we start setting up our wonderful rummage sale. It is always fun to unpack bags and boxes while we chat and share laughs with friends. It is work but it is more about fellowship. If you have an hour or two please stop in and join us.

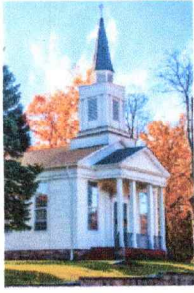
We had a beautiful High Tea on April 22nd. Everyone had a nice time. Thanks to all who helped bake, set up, clean up, and pack up.

Aunt Jenny's Attic will be closing as we pack up in preparation for rummage. We will miss seeing our loyal customers but look forward to seeing a lot of you.

Have a merry, merry month of May.

Blessings, Pam and Linda





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April 2023

Dear Church Family,

The Session of West Milford Presbyterian Church is excited to announce that on March 19, 2023, the members of our church voted to call Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle to serve as our pastor starting May 1, 2023. Our Pastoral Nominating Committee worked for three years until they finally were convinced they had found the right person, at the right time, and in the right place. This is an exciting time for our church – a new beginning with positive change possible if we gather together in fellowship and worship, offering creative thinking, open minds, and welcoming hearts.

Our church has joined in a shared relationship with Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church. This arrangement offers both of our churches the ministry and pastoral care we know Pastor Chris can provide, but also provides financial stability and potential collaboration opportunities as we join together in our shared love of Christ and our commitment to reach out to our communities and to those in need of help.

Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, we will be hosting Pastor Chris' first worship at West Milford at 10 AM. The members of Oak Ridge Presbyterian will be joining us for this joint service in celebration of Pastor Chris' new calling and in support of our shared relationship. If you haven't attended church recently, this is an excellent time to see all the work being done at our church by dedicated volunteers throughout the year. We have planned a welcome station immediately following worship during coffee hour. Leadership and reps from every organization in our church will be available to highlight what we are doing and our hopes for the future. Come hear a new voice from our pulpit – we are convinced you will be inspired by Pastor Chris' style, delivery, and messaging.

***STARTING MAY 14, SUNDAY WORSHIP WILL BEGIN WEEKLY AT 9 AM – A CHANGE FROM OUR USUAL 10 AM TIME SLOT.*** We are hopeful our pews will be full for our 10 AM service on May 7. We invite everyone to partake in the joy and fellowship this service is sure to provide. May the spirit of Christ draw you to our church for this exciting new era in the life of West Milford Presbyterian.

May God bless us all!

Betsy Engelhardt  
Clerk of Session

2023

May						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1 First Day of Adult Practice 3pm - Girls On The Run 6:30pm - WM Players (Tech) 7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	2 9am - Community Food Pantry 6:30pm - WM Players (Tech)	3 11am - Bible Study 6:30pm - WM Players (Tech)	4 National Day Of Prayer 9am - Community Food Pantry 9am - Sr. Saints 6:30pm - WM Players (Tech)	5 6pm - WM Players	6 12pm - WM Players	
7 11am - Joint Worship Service 11am - Sunday School 11am - Worship 12pm - WM Players 6pm - Scouts	8 3pm - Girls On The Run 7:30pm - Session	9 9am - Community Food Pantry 5:30pm - Cheese Making	10 11am - Bible Study	11 9am - Community Food Pantry 9am - Sr. Saints	12 6pm - WM Players	13 9am - Community Food Pantry 12pm - WM Players
14 Mother's Day 11am - Sunday School 11am - Worship 6pm - Scouts	15 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 3pm - Girls On The Run 7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	16 9am - Community Food Pantry	17 11am - Bible Study	18 9am - Community Food Pantry 9am - Sr. Saints	19	20
21 FATHER ACTION 10am - Sunday School 10am - Worship 6pm - Scouts	22 7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	23 9am - Community Food Pantry	24 11am - Bible Study	25 9am - Community Food Pantry 9am - Sr. Saints	26 9am - Community Food Pantry	27
28 Pentecost Sunday 10am - Worship/Family Service 6pm - Scouts	29 Memorial Day 7:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	30 9am - Community Food Pantry	31 11am - Bible Study			3

