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*~FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE~*

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*Volume 18 Issue 8*

*September 2025*

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The Pastor's Pen –

Dear Church Family,

It seems hard to believe, as it always does, that summer has come to an official end again! Some wonderful things took place over the summer, and we hold those things up and rejoice in them. We had another very successful rummage sale and a very successful VBS! West Milford hosted Oak Ridge for the month of July, and Oak Ridge hosted West Milford for August. We've had bible study throughout, had our annual picnic, and our Outdoor Family Movie Night. The Food Pantry continues to amaze, the Senior Saints as always keep us in good shape, Aunt Jenny's is back up and running, and planning for the starting of Sunday School has been well underway. And that's not to mention the numerous facility upgrades and work that's been successfully tackled! WMPC remains a very busy place indeed.

And now we enter into the autumn. The temperatures will be cooler and much of the world will come to seem to revolve around school schedules, however, I'd like to add a couple more things to consider putting onto your fall schedules. First, I'll be offering a New Members class starting toward the end of September. We'll meet on a few Sunday afternoons, usually for a couple of hours, and talk about what it means to be a Reformed Christian, and specifically a Presbyterian, and where that all comes from. We'll take a look at HOW we approach our Scriptures, along with the story of the church, as well as our system of how we organize ourselves as the Body of Christ.

Now this will be officially a 'New Members Class', but I do encourage anyone who might be interested in learning about our church to come also. Together we learn, and together we become a stronger community.

The second thing for consideration, and this one is for very few, is Confirmation Class. Scheduling has not been all worked out, but if your son or daughter would like to participate, or grandchild, let me know so that the proper plans can be put in place.

And, I would also like to put out there a request. As is well known, I do not follow the lectionary, and that's for specific reasons. We, instead, learn by way of sermon series. I'd like to invite folks to suggest a sermon series or an idea for a sermon series. It could be that something that you've always wanted to know about Scripture, or Theology or the Church. Maybe there's a specific book of the bible that you'd really like to zero in on. Let me know your ideas; all in an effort of continuing to learn and explore Scripture together.

And, lastly, I look forward to seeing everyone back in church after the summer vacations and weekend jaunts are scaled back. May this summer have been one filled with great memories, renewed hopes and a spirit coming directly from God.

Be Good & Do Good,

Pastor Chris

## Better ways to read the Bible

Author and pastor the Rev. Zach Lambert is a recent guest on 'A Matter of Faith: A Presby Podcast'

August 12, 2025

Mike Ferguson

Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — In 17 years of church ministry, the Rev. Zach Lambert has seen Scripture “read and applied in harmful ways.” With the Tuesday release of his book “Better Ways to Read the Bible: Transforming a Weapon of Harm Into a Tool of Healing,” Lambert discusses how the faith community he leads, [Restore Church](#) in Austin, Texas, is working to help bring about [one of Jesus’ most important ministry roles](#): “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Lambert, the author of “[Better Ways to Read the Bible: Transforming a Weapon of Harm into a Tool of Healing](#),” was the guest last month on “A Matter of Faith: A Presby Podcast,” hosted each week by Simon Doong and the Rev. Lee Catoe. Listen to their 49-minute conversation [here](#).

Lambert said he’s seen the Bible weaponized “in horrific ways, to subjugate women, justify racism and bash LGBTQ people, cover up abuse and even try to silence anyone who speaks up about those injustices. I became convinced early on [in ministry] that this is the opposite of what Jesus wants.”

At Restore Church, finding better ways to read the Bible began in community, “and I think that’s the most important thing,” he said. “When you’re reading the Bible in a diverse and healthy community, you have a lot less chance of hurting people.” Before and during the Civil War, a substantial amount of defenses for chattel slavery were penned by members of the clergy, Lambert noted. “I can only imagine if it had been a group of both white and Black pastors in a room talking about biblical interpretation, the Black pastors would have said, ‘No, it doesn’t mean that. That’s not how you interpret that passage. I know because of my experience as a Black person in America and because of my loved ones who have been tortured into chattel slavery.’”

Over the years, Lambert and members of Restore Church came up with four healthy lenses for biblical interpretation, which appear in the book:

- Jesus, the Christo-centric lens. “Jesus wants all parts of our life, including our biblical interpretation,” which leads to “abundant life for us and neighbors,” he said.
- Context, the historical-critical analysis of Scripture, including context, culture and genre.
- Flourishing. Lambert includes a chapter on liberation theology, “God’s desire for us to experience flourishing.”
- Fruitfulness, which Lambert identifies as “the lens we use at our church most frequently to say, ‘Jesus said his followers would be known by their fruit.’ Our biblical interpretation should be leading to more of those in us and in the world.”

“My hope is that the book is pastoral,” he said in answer to a question by Catoe. “Anytime we do

deconstruction or reconstruction, it comes from a trauma-informed pastoral lens, understanding just how deep religious trauma is for a lot of people.”

“You see this a lot in the online influencer deconstruction space,” he said. “If you have built a brand on being a deconstruction person, you have to find more things to deconstruct all the time. It can get out of hand pretty quickly.”

Comparing faith to a house made of bricks, Lambert likened hearing something that conflicts with what we’ve experienced to taking a brick out of our house of faith and determining whether, “OK, am I going to ignore my experience, put this brick back into the house and pretend like nothing happened? Do I need to replace this with something that more aligns with my experience because it’s more truthful now, or am I throwing this completely away because I can’t engage with it right now?”

That’s why tools including books and podcasts can be helpful in interpreting the Bible, he said. “We get to move away from soundbite culture that doesn’t allow for much nuance or conversation,” Lambert said, “and move into spaces where we’re actually digging deep into some of these things.”

Restore Church thinks of itself as post-evangelical, he said. “We attempt to take what evangelicals are good at” including personal spirituality and accessibility. “When you walk into an evangelical church, you know what you’re supposed to do,” he explained. “There’s donuts and coffee, music that makes sense and a sermon that’s relative to your life.” It’s “accessible for some people, but as soon as other folks get engaged, they’re told that because of something intrinsic about them, they’re not able to fully participate.”

Restore Church attempts to identify “the things that they do well, and then we pair that with better theology and better Bible interpretation,” he said. “How can we keep the focus on personal spirituality? On helping people have an emotional connection to their faith and their neighbors? How can we make sure church is fun for kids while getting good theology?”

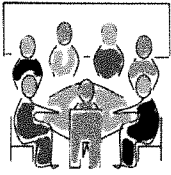
There are post-evangelicals in many PC(USA) and other mainline congregations, Lambert said. “How do we make sure we’re ready to care for those people, support those people, and unleash those people into ministry roles? A lot of them are sharp leaders and hard workers. They know how to get things off the ground. How can we mobilize folks who have those cool characteristics for positive purposes?”

“My proposal,” he said, “is we all lean into things we’re uniquely good at and build bridges not based on ecclesiology or polity or church structure, but on shared values.”

For too long, he said, we have built “denominations and denominational partnerships especially around polity and ecclesiology rather than around shared values.” It’s better to be connected “around justice and Jesus and inclusion — all the things we care deeply about — knowing there are a bunch of different expressions of that. I would love for there to be a place where people could go and say, ‘I’m not going to compromise on these values, but I like this expression and that expression. I think we can make a much bigger and better difference.’”

“Here’s the thing: They’re doing that on the other side. They’re building bridges around shared values. We would say these are terrible values that they share. Their presentation and their church experience is so radically different, and yet they have come together and said, ‘We have these shared values,’” Lambert said. “I wish we could do something like that, almost as a counter to that.”





# SESSION'S REFLECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2025

SUBMITTED BY BETSY ENGELHARDT, CLERK OF SESSION

I'm sure everyone providing an article for the September Newsletter will start by saying "where has the summer gone"!!!! It seems like yesterday I was preparing an article for the July/August Newsletter! Although we take a break from regular meetings during this time, it doesn't mean the outreach efforts of this church aren't ongoing. We reaped the benefits of all the hard labor given towards making the annual Rummage Sale another successful fundraiser for the church in June. July we had to turn away additional applications to attend our popular VBS program because we exceeded the number of children we could accommodate this year. It was another successful program thanks to the hard work of Kathi Ening, Dale Hamilton, the Christian Ed Committee, and many volunteers. August we hosted our second Outdoor Movie Family Festival Night. The weather was in our favor and the food trucks and band brought in good attendance. The Farmer's Market that uses our parking lot on Wednesday's is pleased with the turnout of customers. Many commented enjoying the Fellowship with Oak Ridge Presbyterian members as we joined for worship together for one service throughout July and August. Of course, our Property Committee never rests, making sure everything remains in working order around our property and buildings.

We will resume our Session Meetings starting September 9<sup>th</sup> where we will be discussing the following plans for the fall:

- Collection of Operation Shoe Boxes that will provide smiles during Christmas time for children around the world.
- Pet Blessing event in October.
- Explore offering our building for Grief Counselling on a regular basis.
- Completing our Cemetery Restoration project in time for All Saints Day.
- Hearing more testimonials during worship on how the church has impacted our lives
- Completion of our church pictorial directory.
- AND SO MUCH MORE!!!

Hope everyone enjoyed their summer months. See you back in our sanctuary starting in September.



## DEACONS HAPPENINGS

September 2025

Our summer worship services were shared with the Oak Ridge Church. We were the July hosts. The table was set for the communion service. Flower arrangements were placed on the windowsills. Many thanks to Karen, Myrtle and Linda. They decorate the sanctuary for each occasion. Sharing our service with Oak Ridge members was a special time to be together, especially chatting during Coffee Hour.

At our September meeting we will discuss the ideas that were formed during the spring brainstorming meeting with Session and Deacons members.

Marty Tappan, Moderator

## WA Newsletter

September means school starts, meetings begin, services return to our sanctuary and everything gets busy. Of course a lot has been going on over the summer. The food pantry, VBS, movie night, Aunt Jenny's Attic, the Farmers Market, Bible study, our church always seems to be a hubbub of activity.

Aunt Jenny's reopened in August and has been very busy. It is so nice to have lots of friends stop in to visit and chat.

We have been working on the Christmas Bazaar and craft fair. The contracts are coming in with many wonderful comments about how much they enjoy events at our church because everyone is so nice.

On October 18th we will be selling cotton candy at the Harvest Festival at Bubbling Springs. I encourage all of you to plan on attending. There are lots of FREE activities for children. A bounce house, pumpkin patch, pumpkin painting, games, hay ride, sheriffs horses and dogs, apple cider and donuts, food trucks, music, plus seeing friends and neighbors. It is really a fun day and so rare nowadays to not have to pay for everything. The only money you have to spend is at the food trucks.

Here are some dates to put on your calendar

10/4 Blessing of the animals.

10/5 World Communion Sunday joint service with Oak Ridge in our sanctuary.

10/18 Harvest Festival

11/9 Veterans Day

11/22 Christmas Bazaar

Looking forward to a wonderful year at our great church.

Blessings, Linda



## SUNDAY SCHOOL DOINGS

We hope you had a wonderful, calm summer and felt God's presence wherever and whatever you did.

Thank-you to all the volunteers who helped to make Vacation Bible School-  
MAKER FUN FACTORY- such a success for the 25 children who attended!  
We could not have had so much fun in spreading God's love with out those  
who contributed food, donated money and gave of their time.

If for some reason you missed out on all the fun this year, you can join us  
next year July 13,-July 17th for True North. See you then!

SEPTEMBER 7 is Rally Day-the first day of Sunday School! Once again we  
will have two classes Miss

Dale Pre-K-3rd, and Miss Kathi 4th-8th. This year we will be using a new  
curriculum, with each class learning the same bible story yet with different  
methods of exploring God's Word.

Sunday School is open to all children from Pre-K-8th grade-families do not  
have to be members of our church.

Miss Dale and Miss Kathi look forward to having another joyful, fun and  
inspirational year!

### IMPORTANT DATES

September 7, Rally Day

October 4, Blessing of the Animals

October 18, Fall Festival at Bubbling Springs



shutterstock.com 1457513116

Faithfully submitted by: Kathi Ening

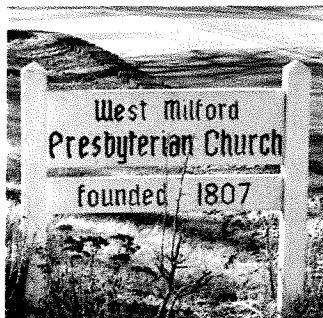


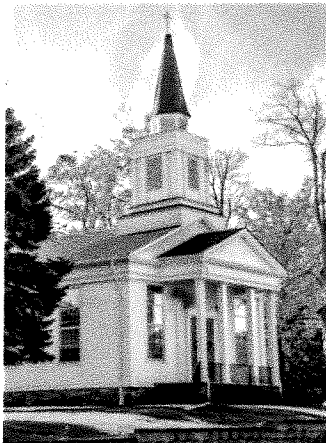
# GRAVESTONE PRESERVATION

This will be the third year working on our preservation project. To date, we have completed cleaning half of the 150 gravestones on our property. Our goal is to complete the project this year in time for All Saints Day on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

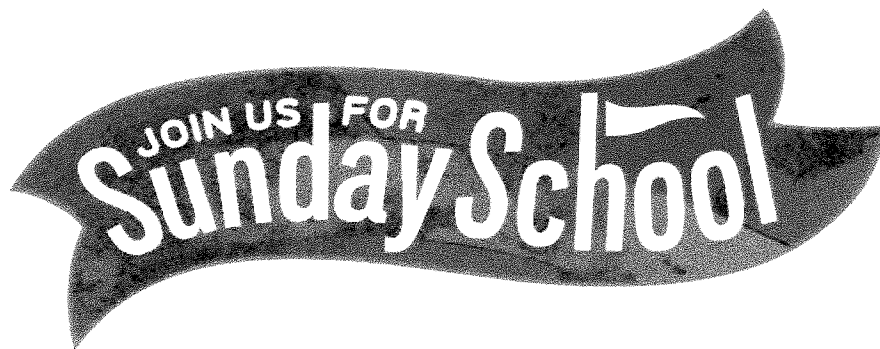
We started with 10 teams agreeing to clean 15 gravestones on a designated list. Some teams completed their 15 stones last year and aggressively progressed to cleaning other gravestones left unattended. A new load of drainage stone has been requested to be donated by Battinelli Landscaping, hoping to see delivery by early September. September & October are excellent months to continue to complete this project. We hope to see the teams back at work in the weeks ahead.

**LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!** You don't have to be on a team to lend a hand. We need labor to clear away the grass and weeds surrounding the flat laying stones. Clearing a 6 inch wide trench around the stones that remain unattended is a huge help to the teams that can then come along with cleaning products to restore the gravestones and line the trenches with drainage stone. Come as your schedule allows. Contact Betsy Engelhardt if you can help with preserving our church history.





West Milford Presbyterian Church



**MIGHTY MESSAGES**

TO TAKE HOME EVERY WEEK

**Begins September 7<sup>th</sup>**

Sundays at 9:00 am

**ALL CHILDREN WELCOME ANYTIME!!**

*(You do not have to be a church member to attend.)*

Call to register or for more information

**973-728-3081**

**wmpchurch@gmail.com**

Please pass on to friends and relatives

1452 Union Valley Road, West Milford, NJ 07480

# Pantry Plea

The mission of our Community Pantry is to replace hunger worry with food security; To supply nutritious items and healthy choices to all who call and ask for help; To leave any judgment of who needs help up to God as we open our Pantry to all who knock.

Here is the comparison of families between visits to the Pantry in 2024 and 2025 to date:

2024	Visits by Families	2025	
January	66	January	107
February	77	February	88
March	86	March	93
April	86	April	104
May	95	May	115
June	76	June	93
July	97	July	118
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>583</b>		<b>718</b>



This is clear evidence that our numbers are increasing but it isn't the whole picture because these numbers only tell how many times families visited, not the number of members in each family. The average number of family members is four. Take July when 118 families called for help, that means  $118 \times 4$  members average = 472 people to be fed just in that one month. In order to supply the volume of food needed we request donations from our congregation, the community, The Plant Church, Ample Harvest, businesses, organizations, continually relying on their empathy towards their neighbors. We at the Pantry don't talk about those we serve out of the need to help them maintain their privacy, but I will assure you that everyone that calls has a story and all that have been shared with me are heart-wrenching and lay heavy on one's soul. *Good people in hard times.*

Is all this asking for help ever enough? Emphatically no. We constantly teeter on the edge of being sustainable and fulfilling our Mission so please consider helping in the future as you have in the past through your donations of food, money, and Shoprite gift cards. Think about joining our team of pantry workers by keeping our shelves orderly, going through our dry goods, and making sure all cans, boxes and bags are up to date. This can be done at any time, day or night, on your own schedule. If you have time on Tuesdays or Thursdays when the pantry is open, consider volunteering to answer the pantry phone and writing down requests for food, bagging items, or receive training so you can take over a time to work or be on a substitute list to be called when a regular worker is ill, etc.

Think about this and talk to any of these church members on the team for more information:

Bonnie Seufert, Pat Wright, Marty Tappan, Dale Hamilton, Roberta Schmidt, Helen Kershaw, Carol Stanhope, Jan Halvorsen

Thank you, Bonnie



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**February 25-28, 2026**

**SIXTH ANNUAL**


**WMPC COMMUNITY ONLINE AUCTION**

**Calling All Summer Adventure Enthusiasts!**

We know it feels early to be thinking about our **2026 Community Online Auction**, but now is exactly the right time to **“plant the seeds”** for the amazing experiences that make it so special.

Here in **West Milford, the heart of summer fun**, we are surrounded by endless outdoor adventures: sparkling lakes perfect for kayaking, paddle boarding, or water skiing... peaceful woods for hiking and garden tours... pontoon boat parties, fishing trips, wine tastings, clam bakes, and so much more—all right at our fingertips.

What makes these activities even more memorable is the generosity of our local professionals, guides, and neighbors who share their talents and expertise. Whether it's teaching a skill, leading an outing, or hosting a unique summer gathering or lake tour, their donations help bring our community together while raising essential funds.

 **Now is the perfect time to reach out.** Once the seasons change, many of these summer offerings go on pause—and opportunities to secure them are missed. *If you know a friend, neighbor, or business that could offer a summer or fall adventure for our auction, please let us know—or better yet, ask them personally if they'd consider donating as a special favor.*

Together, we can showcase the best of West Milford's summer spirit and make our 2026 auction one to remember!

Betsy Engelhardt, Clerk of Session & Roberta Schmidt, Auction Chair



**Sheriff Thomas Adamo &  
The Passaic County Sheriff's Office**

**Invite you to the**

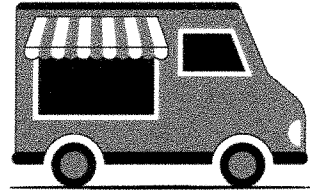
**Fourth Annual**

**HARVEST  
FESTIVAL**

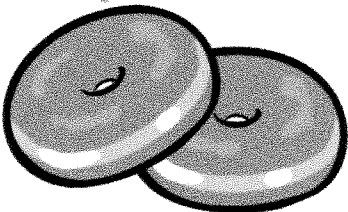
**OCTOBER 18  
12pm-4pm**

**Bubbling Springs Park  
1468 Macopin Rd,  
West Milford**

*Food Trucks*



*APPLE  
CIDER*



*Pumpkin Painting*



**HAY RIDES**



