

A Story Worth Telling

Meet Charles Blackburn.

Born and raised in Connecticut, he excelled as an athlete and received a scholarship to a Division 1 college in California. During his sophomore year, he had an experience that changed the course of his life. He spent the next 30 years homeless in New York City, sleeping on subways and in the Port Authority, supporting a \$100 a day crack addiction through panhandling and crime. “When I was in jail I felt like I was being rescued from the streets because I had nowhere to go,” Charles said. “I felt like I was going to spend the rest of my life panhandling and using drugs.”



Then, one day, he felt “a touch” from the Lord. “I felt a touch when I was walking around the Port Authority that released me from my addiction,” he said. “I can’t explain it, but I knew it was God. I started crying right there on the sidewalk. I felt like the Lord looked into my heart, heard my cries and freed me from an addiction that had overpowered me for 30 years.”

Just then, a passerby told Charles that people were handing out soup and bread around the corner. “It was The Relief Bus,” he recalled. “They fed me, and I met a fellow named Sean. He asked me if I wanted to go somewhere to get help and change my life. I said yes.”

Sean brought Charles to the New York City Rescue Mission, where he immediately felt like he belonged. “It was a God send,” said Charles. “It’s a place where people care and love you and take the time to see who you are.”

Today, Charles is on staff at the New York City Rescue Mission, using his life experience to help others. “I feel this is what God wants me to do—to help people and give back,” he said. “When you help someone, you receive blessings from the Lord. I find that the more I help people, the Lord continues to bless my life. My cup is running over with so much goodness!”

You can help by contributing to our Advent/Christmas Campaign to raise \$61,471 for New York City Relief—\$1 for every homeless person in a shelter in New York City. You can give online at www.westside.org, use an offering envelope or pay by credit card today with Anna Levy. She’ll be in the Narthex and outside DePhillips Hall. Thank you for your support!

Is This Your First Time Visiting West Side?

Welcome! We're so glad you're here. We look forward to helping you connect with others, grow more deeply in your faith and enrich your own life by serving others. Wherever you are on life's journey, there's a place for you at West Side.

Please stop by the visitor table located just inside the front doors, fill out a Let's Connect card and pick up a visitor bag. And please stay after the service to enjoy coffee/tea and refreshments and meet the pastors and members.

Have a question? Our staff is here to help:

Rev. Marc Oehler, pastor, moehler@westside.org

Rev. Penny Hogan, associate pastor, phogan@westside.org

Rev. Liz Junod, pastoral associate, ljunod@westside.org

Deborah Holden-Holloway, minister of music, dholden-holloway@westside.org

Pat McGlade, R.N., faith community nurse, pmcglade@westside.org

Esmé Elkins, children's ministry coordinator, eelkins@westside.org

Anne Lee, executive administrative assistant, alee@westside.org

Advent Sermon Series: Prophets Then, Prophets Now

As we prepare for Christmas, we'll spend some time with prophets—both those who inspired Jesus and those who were inspired *by* him. Prophets do not necessarily predict what *will* happen as much as they reveal what *is* happening, and what we are often conditioned not to see. They criticize the dominant consciousness, which too often benefits the few at the expense of the many, and energize us toward an alternative consciousness that is more fully aligned with God's intentions. Unless we understand this, we can't fully understand Jesus, who criticizes the kingdoms and empires of this world and energizes us toward an alternative—the kingdom of God. Unless we understand this, we can't fully understand who God is calling us to be as Christians. This Advent we'll be challenged to "keep Christ in Christmas" by keeping the prophetic edge alive in the church and in all who call themselves "little Christs." — *Pastor Marc Oehler*



Sunday Night Live!

Middle school and high school youth are invited to a Christmas Party **TODAY** at the Barn from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Drop off your kids for 90 minutes of fun, fellowship and awesome music. Please bring a dessert to share with the group.

Third Thursday Christmas Party

Guys, you're invited to a Christmas party at Ron Ledwith's home on **December 20** at 7:30 pm. Join Ron, Dave DeFeo, Gib Warren, Pastor Marc and the rest of the Third Thursday crew for a festive evening. Please RSVP to Anne Lee (alee@westside.org) by December 17.

Annual Christmas Pageant

It's something that West Siders of all ages look forward to every year—our “pop up” Christmas pageant. Children are invited to participate at the 9:00 or 10:15 am service on **December 23**. No advance preparation is needed. Kids simply pick up a costume (animals, wise men, shepherds, angels) 15 minutes before the start of worship. They will then be invited to participate in the interactive telling of the Christmas story and Moment for All Ages. Parents: Please sit up front so that your children can feel connected to worship and can easily find you after the pageant. Sunday School will be offered for Pre-K through 1st grade.



Will You Help Serve?

For many of us, Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year. But it's also one of the best times of the year to serve others. We still need a number of volunteers to serve lunch at Eva's Village on **December 29 and 30**. We meet in the West Side parking lot at 10:30 am, carpool to Paterson and return by 1:30 pm. If you'd like to participate in this ministry, please email Craig Matthews (craigmatthews@aol.com).



May this
Tree of Lights
shine forth from the
West Side Memorial Garden
to commemorate the birth of our Savior
and
to honor the beloved souls interred.

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During this season of light, peace and hope, may the West Side Memorial Garden Tree of Lights radiate an embracing and loving calm to all who witness its quiet beauty.

Please visit www.westside.org for more information about our programs.

TODAY AT WEST SIDE

8:00 am—Little Lambs Child Care - Room 211	10:15 am— Traditional Worship - Sanctuary
8:15 am— Chapel Worship - Chapel	10:15 am—Sunday School - Rooms 202, 306, 311, 312 and Serenity Room
9:00 am— Contemporary Worship - DePhillips Hall	11:15 am—Sermon Talk Back - Chapel
9:00 am—Sunday School - Rooms 202, 306, 311, 312 and Serenity Room	11:15 am—Prayer Circle - Chapel
9:00 am—“What is the Bible?” Book Study - Conference Room	11:30 am—Stewardship Meeting - Conference Room
9:15 am—“Interrupted by Hope” Video Series - Pulsifer Chapel	3:00 pm—Parlance Chamber Concert - Sanctuary
9:45 am—Centering Prayer - West Side Room	6:00 pm—Men’s Council Meeting

COMING UP AT WEST SIDE

- December 20 - Third Thursday Christmas Party** at Ron Ledwith’s home, 7:30 pm
- December 23 - “Pop Up” Christmas Pageant** at the 9:00 and 10:15 am services
- December 24 - Office closes at noon.**
- December 24 - 4:00 pm** - Traditional Lessons and Carols (with special chapel time for children)
- 6:30 pm** - Contemporary Worship with a Live Band
- 10:00 pm** - Traditional Candlelight Worship with Communion
- December 25 - Office closed for Christmas.**
- December 31 - New Year’s Eve Worship** at 5:00 pm in Pulsifer Chapel
- January 5 - Choir Retreat** at 9:00 am in DePhillips Hall and the choir rooms
- January 12 - Session and Deacons Retreat** in DePhillips Hall at 8:30 am
- January 13 - Emotionally Healthy Relationships** course in DePhillips Hall at 4:00 pm
- January 17 - Third Thursday Men’s Group** at Bill McCord’s home at 7:30 pm
- January 20 - Paul Van Ness and Friends Concert** in the Sanctuary at 3:00 pm