

*Some questions with answers from Rev. Marc Oehler, West Side's new Associate Pastor for Parish Life:*

*Q. Why did you want to leave your position at the Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township?*

A. I felt like I had done my work there and it was a natural time to move on. I felt I had grown out of that position and was ready for something new.

*Q. Why did you choose to come to West Side?*

A. I've come to a point in my professional career when I desire to work with what I feel are my gifts, which involve spiritual formation in adults. I was looking for a church that values this and that would give me this kind of chance. This position combines my love for ministry and discipleship and will allow me to grow with people. I'm excited to work with the people of this congregation, and also Gareth and Liz.

*Q. What are you most looking forward to here?*

A. This is a position that I would have designed for myself! But I never would have thought to ask for it and didn't think it existed in the Presbyterian church. What is that old proverb? God writes straight with crooked lines? It's such a big opportunity for me to work with this staff, with Gareth and Liz, both of whom have a focus on spiritual formation.

*Q. What have been your strongest impressions from your first week at work?*

A. The way the congregation cares for each other. Seeing how collaborative the worship is and how rich the connections are here. Feeling the hospitality from the staff and the congregation. Understanding that I'm in a new place and that the congregation is, too.

*Q. What do you think will be your biggest challenges?*

A. Determining what I am being called to do—sometimes it's a little under the surface. Gareth's way is to be patient and deliberate, to go for the long-term, as is mine. But I know when you're inviting adults to grow deeply and widely, there's no way to do that without committing yourself to face conflict with an open heart.

*Q. Where do you see West Side going in the next 10 years?*

A. We're going to grow in faith, but I don't know right now what that looks like. My way of leading, my general vision, is to try to understand what being the church of Jesus Christ at this time and place means. I'm going to spend a lot of time listening and exploring.

*Q. What are your goals for your first year?*

A. To meet every member of the congregation, for one thing! To get to know people and find out where there is enough and where we are lacking in something. To find ways to let go of what we don't truly need and more fully embrace what we do. To help Gareth and the Session develop a vision for our future and clarify what it will look like. To embody and make decisions that are faithful to that.

—Abby Gary