

“Being a Community of Care: An Update on Chris Williams”

By Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Schooley

As most of you reading this already know, long-time member and active Ruling Elder, Chris Williams, suffered a significant brain bleed in mid-March and has been in a medically critical state ever since. This news has been shared and we have prayed – and will continue to pray – for Chris, but I’ve also noticed many folks seeking more specific information about how he is doing, which is a completely reasonable and loving thing to want. However, we are just a large enough church that if everyone tries to ask me individually for updates, I’m not likely to have much time left for any other work. And then, of course, there is the inevitable, non-malicious errors of information that come when any group of people plays “the Telephone Game” with one another. As such, I’m going to endeavor in this article to provide you with as much information as I have that we might have a shared body of knowledge to work from.



Two quick caveats, though: First, while not personally bound by HIPAA, I’m going to do my best to abide by the spirit of that law as a way of protecting Chris’ privacy. As such, what I share here may be a little sparse on certain details. What I can promise is that the details I share here are shared as a form of empowerment for you all as you seek to care for Chris (hence the title to this article, “Being a Community of Care”). My goal here is still that this moment is part of our discipleship of Jesus Christ and, by the grace of God, might even provide us an encounter with Jesus Christ. Second, this is a *very* fluid situation so how evergreen is anything I write here remains to be seen. Certain details could be proven inaccurate just as soon as this information is published, but to the best of my ability and to the best of my knowledge, what I share here is the same information I’m using as I seek to care for Chris as his pastor in this unique moment in Chris’ life.

Okay, with those asides set aside, here’s the rundown:

Chris began demonstrating some signs of confusion on Wednesday, March 18 when I spoke with him after that evening’s WeMeet. He looked a little unstable and confused at that time, but he had also fallen asleep during the meeting and told me, when I asked how he was feeling, that he was just tired. I accepted his explanation, and he drove home that night. I could not, however, shake my concern so the next morning – on Thursday, March 19 – I texted him at a time I knew he would be awake in order to go substitute teach and when I still hadn’t heard back from him 90 minutes later, I took a detour from the staff meeting I was driving to in order to check in on him. On this morning, I found him in an undeniable state of confusion and after a little coaxing and maybe a touch of bribery (I still owe Chris a breakfast... a debt I will joyfully pay when he’s able to join me for it!), I took him to the ER. Chris has not returned home since that morning.

What follows is all rather predictable: Quick care as a possible stroke victim at Wood County Hospital

(we really do have high-quality medical professionals in our community, thanks be to God!), CT scan, revelation of the brain bleed, and transfer to St. Vincent's in Toledo because they have an actual neurological unit for patients like Chris. I spoke with Chris that evening after he was settled at St. V's and he was still very confused but was responsive. Sometime, though, during that intervening weekend, he began to demonstrate sustained troubles with his blood pressure (a real risk for someone with a brain bleed) and issues with his breathing. On either Tuesday, March 24 or Wednesday, March 25 the decision was made to intubate Chris.

Eventually, Chris needed to be transferred out of the neurological ICU at St. V's (and God bless them for keeping him there as long as they did, because they completed any actual neurological care within his first few days with them... and it is a *neurological* ICU) and transferred to a long-term acute care (LTAC) facility in Sylvania. This occurred only after the medical staff at St. V's removed his intubation tube in favor of a tracheotomy, which is the necessary equipment to help someone breath when their need for such support extends beyond the two-week max that doctors are willing to keep a patient intubated.

Between the still as-yet-unknown impacts of the brain bleed and the 15 days of heavy sedation (for his intubation), it does appear as if Chris has lost some cognitive or communicative (or both?) abilities. Whatever the genesis, the outcome remains the same: At present, it is clear that Chris can process at least some information, but how much is still unknown. He is also unable to speak because of the tracheotomy, which makes even simple cognitive tests more difficult. The therapeutic emphasis, therefore, has been on respiration, which is working well thus far. He is no longer on a ventilator, though the tracheotomy remains as a way of providing him extra oxygen. If you like specifics in your prayers to God, a good specific prayer would be for Chris to resume breathing well all on his own and to such a degree that his oxygenation numbers stay where they should be so that the tracheotomy can be removed. Additionally, cognition – and Chris had/has a most beautiful brain, as anyone who has talked with him knows – is still an open question, but is also worthy of your prayers. There is no reason, however, to project any superlative hopes or fears in this area; we will know where he is at when we need to know it.

Of course, a person is more than just their biological processes. Chris had a rich and robust life prior to this medical event, and he has (like we all do) on-going commitments, even mundane commitments like rent, credit card payments, etc. Many of you have asked me about these aspects of his life, so I will again share as much as I'm comfortable with while still maintaining at least a degree of his privacy.

First, his cats are fine. Initially Dar and Corky went to Chris' apartment in order to care for them but once it became clear that Chris wouldn't be returning home any time soon, they relocated the cats to their home for both their own convenience and to increase the quality of care his kitties are getting. They have some step-siblings to play with at their home.

Second, his apartment: Accommodations have been made to play out the length of Chris' lease, which ends on July 31, or until other safe and respectful arrangements for his possessions can be made. A number of folks – congregants, his landlady, his out-of-state family, and others – have worked collaboratively and I will testify that respect for Chris in/through our respect for Chris' stuff has been the north star of our decision-making.

Third, his family: Chris has only a small remaining family and they are spread about the United States to such a degree that it would take any one of them at least a day to travel here (and that's assuming flights). They have, however, all been contacted after some delay in finding contact information for them, and they are part of

his care team. His sister, Donna, is certainly worthy of your prayers because without an established medical power of attorney she has become, by dint of being the next closest living relative, his de facto medical POA. She had a bit of bombshell drop into her life and she has handled it with great aplomb, while also humbly soliciting guidance from others who she knows loves Chris.

Fourth, legalities: At present, many are working to get Chris a court-appointed guardian who can work toward Chris' best interests while Chris is presently unable to do so. I'll confess that I do not know the intricacies of the law in this area, but it would stand to reason that once Chris can demonstrate a capacity to make his own decisions that he will resume all the rights and responsibilities of an adult. In the in-between time, though, it is important to get an objective, third-party – like a lawyer – to serve this role while staying in conversation with Chris' friends, family, and church family. Trust, though, that safeguards are being put in place. I mean, we're Presbyterian... we never let just one person count the offering and we use "debts" in the Lord's Prayer. This sort of financial-legal prudence is baked into our DNA!

Fifth, long-term care: Sadly, even the most optimistic medical professionals do not think that Chris will be able to return to any sort of independent living before his lease is up on July 31, which means that at some point in his recovery journey he will be *technically* unhoused. This is one of the reasons that those who are helping coordinate his care are focusing on safely securing and storing his possessions for such a time as when he can return to enjoying them.

And it's this long-term care where I want to end this article because the future is uncertain in this regard. To be sure, we are a people who believe in miracles and eternally spring our hope. Also, to be sure, we are sober-minded realists who are probably a little too good at Googling recovery stats from long-term sedation and brain bleeds. In truth, none of us actually know what is next and so what we think and how we then would think to prepare for Chris' future is more a reflection of our own souls than any empirical facts about Chris himself. And that's okay. It's okay that we're each bringing a different sort of disposition.

I realized this most acutely when at our most recent Session meeting, one of the Elders very emphatically responded to my grittier, realist take (maybe even bordering on a glass-half-empty take) by saying, "oh no! No! We can't give up hope. Not yet." And she meant it! I didn't take it personally, just as I doubt she took my more grizzled approach personally either. But it was a moment of clarity where I realized that we're all going to have a different take on even the information I've provided here. Some of you are maybe reading now with tears in your eyes because you're scared for Chris and sad for all of us. Some of you may find your mind spinning with a "this, that, and the other thing" sort of logistical planning, wondering out loud, "Has Pastor Jeff thought of....?" And some of you may just feel a deeper resolve to pray – more and more fervently. All of these are appropriate, good, and holy responses. All of them are needed responses if we are to be "a Community of Care." My only caution, then, is that we tend gently with one another's dispositions, especially when it doesn't match our own (or is even diametrically opposite our own). No one's character should be judged by how they respond to a crisis. I, for one, am very much a "plan for the worst, hope for the best" sort of person. I'm not opposed to hope and trust in prayer, but my disposition is to white knuckle the hard moments with an eye toward lessening the impacts of a worst-case scenario.

Finally, there is likely to be many opportunities for more tangibly serving Chris in the near future – all those books aren't going to pack themselves! – so stay tuned to other church communications about that when the time is right.

And that's about it. But maybe I should end with a metaphor that I hope Chris would appreciate:

The minor chords I play may sound dark and gloomy, but when combined with someone else's major chords, the major chords feel that much brighter and hopeful. The goal isn't to judge each chord, but to work together to make beautiful music as a community of care.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Witte's Words

Note from the Editor: Karen Witte (said "witty") has been a member of FPCBG for 50+ years. She currently resides at BG Manor and isn't able to make it to church, but would still like to bless her church using her God-given gift with words. She used these gifts in her career as a proofreader for the Sentinel-Tribune. Make sure to check out "Witte's Words" each month in the pages of this newsletter. This month's offering offers a great well to reflect on the Easter season. Enjoy this month's poem.

I'm sorry

Dear Jesus, I'm so sorry for what we did to you.

You came to save us from our sins, but we murdered you. I know it was your father's plan to bring us back to him. I'm so sorry it had to be so painful and so grim. The wounds we gave you are visible above, lasting through eternity, like your undying love.

I'm sorry we're so wicked you had to die,

But with your strength and goodness

You rose to live on high

I'm glad you gave humanity

Another chance in life. I hope we won't blow it.

With more sins and wars and strife.

I'm sorry I still sin.

I don't put you first.

I'm guilty of the sin of pride

And that one is the worst.

I don't know how to stop it.

I don't know what to do.

I know I won't be sorry

To turn into prayer to you.

MAY FYMS PAGE

Family and Youth Ministry Monthly Updates



DESSERT AUCTION

May 31st After Worship

Join us on May 31st for a fun and meaningful Dessert Auction to support an exciting upgrade to our church nursery!

We're raising funds to give this important space a much-needed refresh so our children can enjoy a safe, clean, and welcoming place to play and grow. You can get involved by bringing your favorite homemade dessert to donate or simply by bringing your sweet tooth and bidding on the delicious treats available. Every bite and every bid helps make a difference—come be part of creating a joyful space for our kids!



Let Amanda know if you plan on bringing something to bid on.



CAMP OFFERINGS

Camps available for ages 3 - 99!

Don't think that camp is just for the youth! Kirkmont offers, and our church gives scholarships for, camps for almost any age or group check out what Kirkmont has to offer from the list below, check out kirkmontcenter.org for more information or talk to Amanda to see how you can get your camp journey started!

PYC Jr/Sr	Rejoice	YOU AND ME	ADULT
June 14-20 Grades 3-12	July 5 - 11 Grades 3-12	July 11 - 12 Ages 3-17 (With Adult)	August 28-30 Ages 18 - 99+

Pentecost Sunday



Sunday May 24th is Pentecost! Wear as much red as you can and be prepared for a church Birthday Party! Come celebrate the birth of the church together!

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**The office is closed daily for
lunch 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.**



Helping Hands – May 8



This project is gaining community recognition as shown by more people finding the assistance program. Our church donates hygiene and cleaning products to the effort. If you would like to donate products, we need the following items.

- ◆ Children's pull-ups (sizes 2, 3)
- ◆ Adult Bladder-control disposable underwear (sizes M, L)
- ◆ Toilet paper
- ◆ Facial Tissues
- ◆ Paper towels
- ◆ Dish soap
- ◆ Laundry detergent/dryer sheets
- ◆ Body wash/shampoo
- ◆ Deodorant

Please place donations in the box located in the church lobby by May 3rd for distribution on May 8th at the First Christian Church. If you want to contribute but don't have time to shop, a monetary donation can be made. The Deacons will do the shopping.

If you would like to help with the distribution of the cleaning and hygiene items, just show up on May 8th from 4 to 6 pm at First Christian Church, corner of Poe and Haskins Roads. You will see familiar faces.

DEACONS
Following to Lead | Leading to Serve

Ellyn Stout, Scotty Huntington, Libby Dachik,
Kathy Sweeney, Lee Liebetreu, Anna Beeker,
Terri McNamara

**WE NEED YOUR
TREASURES!**



The 2026 Presbyterian Women's annual rummage sale is scheduled for August 21 and 22, 9-3 pm. We will need lots of stuff and lots of helpers to make this a successful event! Now is the time to get control of that clutter! Start cleaning out those basements and closets! **(Don't bring your treasures in until the assigned drop off days TBA).**

Donations of housewares, toys, linens, sporting equipment, etc. can be dropped off in the Fellowship Hall starting two weeks prior to the event. There will be more information on drop-off schedules and volunteer sign up in the upcoming months. All proceeds from this event support various projects, disaster relief efforts and missions, both domestic and international.



Ready to help weed?
**Join Bob Callecod on
Tuesday, May 5 around
9 am to help pull weeds
and keep our outdoor**

areas looking good.

We've just celebrated Earth Day on April 22. If you missed We Meet that day, here's some of what you missed, thanks to Bob's research:

Earth Day was founded April 22, 1970 by Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin. Nearly 20 million people participated the first year. Earth day went global in 1990 and reached 192 countries and 200 million people. Now Earth Day is estimated to involve over one billion people in over 200 countries.

*The first Earth Day was inspired by two major events. First was the 1962 publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, which raised awareness of the impact of pesticides on animals, especially birds. Then in 1969, the Cuyahoga River caught fire for the 13th time.*

Other environmental concerns of the time included the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, labor unions' concern for safer working conditions, widespread water and air pollution, and what was being slowly recognized as climate change and global warming. All of these factors made people wonder what we were doing to the world around us.

Within a few years after the first Earth Day, there were a number of positive steps. Many of these took place under, surprisingly, then-President Nixon. The Environmental Protection Agency was formed, accompanied by the passage of the National Environmental Protection Act. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration, or OSHA, was formed. Other legislation included the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. Later, the US was part of the Paris Climate Accord in 2015.

Politics has interfered with the effectiveness of many of these steps, but there has been progress. We have cleaner air and water, and our vehicles are more fuel efficient. There are better workplace safety standards. There are more recycling and reusing programs, which fit with the Earth Day mantra of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Nearly every new watt of power added to the grid is coming from clean, renewable sources. The High Seas Treaty was ratified by 60 maritime countries to protect the ocean environment. Animal species such as the Monarch butterfly and White Rhino are making a comeback.

Finally, research is revealing massive underground fungal networks that are breathing tons of carbon from the environment. In other words, the earth is a self-healing system if we humans work in concert with natural systems.



Tip of the month:

Do your part to honor the spirit of Earth Day. Remember to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Little things make a difference. Examples:

- Mulch leaves and grass.
- Compost garbage (remember that you can bring food waste to the city's food compost bins near the airport).
- Replace gas operated lawn and garden equipment with battery powered equipment.
- Turn off the lights when not in use.
- Don't let the water run.
- Bring gently used clothes you don't need anymore to the Deacon's Shop.



Thank you to the Chancel Choir & the FP Presby Bell Ringers for an amazing season! A special thank you to the bell choir for their excellent performance at the BG Bell Extravaganza on April 26th!

Historical Preservation Month

May is Historical Preservation Month and once again our church is celebrating the history of our beautiful church building. Built in 1921 after our 1888 church building was destroyed by fire, our current building has served our congregation for over 105 years. During May, a "History Lives Here" sign will be placed in front of our church recognizing it as one of Bowling Green's historical buildings. A QR code on the sign will provide information for a self-guided walking tour of other historical buildings in our neighborhood.



May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
ESL=English as a	YG=Youth	Med.	HYT=Horizon	CN=Chris. Nurture	TL= Trumpet	SC=Sort Clothes
					1 6 First Friday at Carrabba's Italian Grill	2
3 10 Worship w/Communion 11 Fellowship 1 Guitar Lesson 4 Girl Scouts 7 MRG-GL	4 Closed	5 1 Book Group in Library 5:30 ESL Classes 8 AA in FH	6 9 Sorting Clothes 3-4 Trumpet Lessons 5:30 We Meet	7 9:30 Deacons' Shop is open 5:30 ESL Classes 7 MR in FH	8 4:30- Helping Hands at First Christian Church	9
10 10 Worship 11 Fellowship 11 Mission 1 Guitar Lesson 4 Girl Scouts 7 MRG-GL	11 Closed 6:30-8:30 BG Song - FH	12 1 Book Group in Library 5:30 ESL Classes 5 Session 6-8 La Conexion GL 8 AA in FH	13 9 Sorting Clothes 3-4 Trumpet Lessons 5:30 We Meet (Last One)	14 9:30 Deacons' Shop is open 5:30 ESL Classes 7 MR in FH	15 6-8:30 La Conexion-FH	16
17 10 Worship 11 Fellowship 11 Deacons 1 Guitar Lesson 4 Girl Scouts	18 Closed 4:30 Kindred Spirits	19 1 Book Group in Library 3-7 Presbytery Mtg in Findlay 8 AA in FH	20 9 Sorting Clothes 3-4 Trumpet Lessons	21 9:30 Deacons' Shop is open & Staff mtg 2:15 Gr. Team Mtg. 5 Worship 7 MR in FH	22 Office Closed for Holiday	23 1-6 Private Birthday Party in FH
24 10 Worship 11 Fellowship 1 Guitar Lesson 4 Girl Scouts 7 MRG-GL	25 Closed	26 1 Book Group in Library 7 Cong. Care & Christian Nurture mtgs 8 AA in FH June Newsletter Deadline	27 9 Sorting Clothes 3-4 Trumpet Lessons	28 9:30 Deacons' Shop is open & Staff mtg 5:30 ESL Classes 7 MR in FH	29	30 3-7 La Conexion in FH
31 10 Worship 11 Fellowship 1 Guitar Lesson 4 Girl Scouts 7 MRG-GL						



May 02	Steve Melchi
May 11	Mary Bielen, Kat Nic
May 16	Mike Geyman
May 18	Kelsey Carter
May 19	Jennifer Codding
May 22	Lilly Fischer
May 24	Morgan Kellow
May 25	Gale Swanka, Gary Saunders
May 30	Chet Marcin, Emily Rife
May 31	Conner Geyman

(if your birthday doesn't appear here, please contact the office with your date of birth mm/dd/year)

2026 Officers of the Church

SESSION

Class of 2026: Dar Bevelhymmer, Karla Geyman, Chris Williams
 Class of 2027: Anne Moser, Christine Guenther, Lisa Lawson
 Class of 2028: Jen Codding, Michael Botts
 Moderator: Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Schooley: Clerk: Anne Moser

DEACONS

Class of 2026: Kathy Sweeney, Lee Liebetreu
 Class of 2027: Libby Dachik, Scotty Huntington, Ellyn Stout
 Class of 2028: Anna Beeker, Terri McNamara
 Chair: Terri McNamara Secretary: Libby Dachik

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Class of 2026: Lowell Nees, Dana Nemeth
 Class of 2027: Rosemary Apple, Chet Marcin
 Class of 2028: Mike Evans, Joyce Kepke
 Chairs: Dana Nemeth

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