

Meet Rev. Diane E. Knauf

Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Connection



Diane Knauf is a native of Rochester, NY. She has been married to her husband Andrew (Drew) an industrial engineer/project manager, since 1990. They are parents to two young men: Alex (26), who works for a Raleigh, NC, engineering firm in Geomatics, and Ben (18) who is studying film and video at Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, NC. Ready to experience with them the joys of life on Hilton Head is their rescue pup, Bowen.

Diane is a graduate of the State University of New York at Brockport with a degree in English. She taught in the public schools before earning a Master of Divinity at Colgate Rochester. She is currently enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and will graduate in May 2023.

She was ordained in 1997 to serve as Associate Pastor at Grace Covenant Presbyterian, near downtown Orlando, FL. She and her family then returned to Rochester, where she served as solo pastor of Lakeside Presbyterian, a small urban church. A career change for Drew led them to Raleigh where she served until 2021 as Associate Pastor at Saint Andrews Presbyterian, a congregation of 850 members. There she oversaw the educational ministries; resourced the care ministry of the Deacons and Stephen Ministers, preached monthly, and led Bible study. During the pandemic, she felt a call to serve as solo pastor at a small church in eastern North Carolina, Mount Olive Presbyterian. An older congregation, they are a faith-filled group and Diane has enjoyed making pastoral visits and driving them on the church bus for outings at Cracker Barrel.

Diane believes God is calling her to serve a congregation that is Christ-inspired, staff-equipped, and lay-led; where a relationship with Jesus calls us to our life's work and is a means of salvation and personal encouragement. She has found all of these things in First Presbyterian, Hilton Head Island. The APNC has worked to represent the faith and energy of the congregation, and she is very much looking forward to working with, and learning from, Will and others on staff. Diane is honored to be considered for the role of Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Connection.



Diane E. Knauf

faith journey

I came to know and love Jesus through my parents, who demonstrated their faith through lives of service, kindness and integrity. They never pressured me to be overly involved in church but I saw how important their faith was to them, and it intrigued me. When I was 18, I read William Barclay's commentary on Mark and was fascinated by his interpretation and how spending time in scripture made Jesus seem very real to me. At that time, I made an adult decision to follow Christ.

I became a public school teacher, and even more than teaching Shakespeare I enjoyed listening to the life-issues teens would share with me. I considered becoming a counselor but then became involved in First, Corning NY. I served as a part-time educator while beginning my seminary journey at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Christian Education became a passion of mine. I wanted to help others experience the "a-ha" moments I had (and still have!) each time I discover my story interwoven within the larger story of God's love for the world in Jesus Christ.

Drew and I married, and after he received an MBA, and I my Master of Divinity, we adventured to Florida to start our lives. After welcoming our first son, Alex, Drew was diagnosed with cancer. God gifted both of us with patience and perseverance as I tended to an active toddler and Drew received treatment at MD Anderson in Houston. I had no choice but to lean deeply on the Holy Spirit's strength, trusting that God's provision would be more than sufficient for the day. I discovered that Jesus is present with us in our suffering and that is enough.

During that time, I received my first call to Grace Covenant, Orlando. I learned that a pastor must be willing to receive as well as give, as the congregation cared for us as an expression of their discipleship. In time, Drew was declared cancer-free, and we re-prioritized our life goals, committing ourselves to service with a deep sense of gratitude. Our second son, Ben, is also a Florida baby, born through the miracle of in vitro fertilization. The challenges of this season made me more compassionate toward others in their struggles and awakened my calling to pastoral care and compassion ministries.

I bring the identities of being a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, and a friend to my ministry, while resting in the assurance that I am also a beloved child of God. Over the years, I've learned that failure can be the catalyst for growth and wisdom. God in Jesus Christ has a way of picking up the broken pieces and fashioning them into something beyond my imagining. I've come to understand pastoral leadership as not necessarily doing it all myself, but rather equipping and encouraging laypeople to use their gifts to take ownership of ministries of the church. I find the most joy when working as part of a team. I contribute certain skills and wisdom, but we are all fellow disciples serving together.

The pandemic has stretched my thinking about the nature of church, reaffirming that while our buildings are precious gathering sites, the church and its mission transcend all localities. God is working through the pain of this season to lead us out into the world--physically, virtually--to connect in previously unimagined ways. It's a difficult yet exciting time to be a pastoral leader. I am learning to get out of the way and let the Spirit move where it will.

In each call to ministry I've received, I've felt God speaking very plainly, opening doors and at times pushing me through. Ultimately, I know that God is working out God's purposes in my life, in the church, and in the world. I'm excited to receive the call to serve at First, Hilton Head Island, and I trust that God will use me, my gifts and my experiences in ways that will share Christ's love, as well as stretch and strengthen my own faith.