

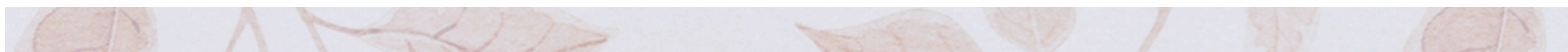


THE LIGHT



**"I AM ABOUT TO DO A
NEW THING..."**

ISAIAH 43:19



Pastor's Page with Rev. Dr. Valdir Franca

Time, Hope, and Faithful Community

"Whoever first imagined dividing time into slices we now call years was a genius. By doing so, humanity learned how to industrialize hope—packaging it, stretching it, and working it until exhaustion. Twelve months are often enough for any human being to grow weary, discouraged, or tempted to give up. And then, almost miraculously, the calendar turns. A new number appears. With it comes a renewed desire to believe that this time, things can be different." (My translation of a Brazilian poem, unknown author)

This rhythm of exhaustion and renewal is deeply human. We end one year carrying unmet expectations, broken resolutions, unanswered prayers, and lingering grief. Yet, when January arrives, something within us dares to hope again. We reset goals, rekindle dreams, and open our hearts to the possibility of transformation. This is not naïve optimism—it is a quiet testimony to the way God has woven hope into our very nature.

Scripture understands this rhythm well. The Letter to the Hebrews speaks to a community that was tired—spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. They were facing pressure, disappointment, and the temptation to withdraw. In that context, Hebrews offers a crucial exhortation: "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering... and let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not abandoning our meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Hope, according to Hebrews, is not meant to be carried alone. It is sustained in community. When time wears us down and faith feels thin, the community of faith becomes the place where hope is renewed—not by pretending everything is fine, but by walking together through what is real.

At Miami Shores Presbyterian Church, we are reminded that faithfulness is not a solo journey. God calls us to remain connected, to resist isolation, and to lean into community even when it feels easier to step back. The miracle of renewal does not come only from the turning of a calendar page, but from the Spirit at work among God's people—praying together, serving together, and sharing life together.

This is especially important as we continue to engage the missional challenges before us. Our church does not exist for itself alone. In partnership with others, we seek to walk alongside those who are vulnerable, to support causes that dignify God's children, and to offer tangible expressions of love and justice. These efforts are not short-term projects; they require perseverance, faithfulness, and mutual encouragement over time.

Hebrews reminds us that perseverance is sustained when we "provoke one another to love and good deeds." That provocation happens when we show up—when we worship together, open space for prayer, and allow God to shape us as a communal body. Communal worship is not merely a tradition; it is a lifeline. It is where weary hearts are lifted, where hope is re-centered in Christ, and where we are reminded that we belong to one another.

As a community of faith at Miami Shores Presbyterian Church, we are invited anew to pray, serve, and share in solidarity with the wider community. Each of us carries gifts, talents, and treasures entrusted by God—not for personal gain, but for the building up of Christ's body and the blessing of the world. When we offer these gifts faithfully, hope becomes more than a feeling; it becomes a lived witness.

The turning of the year offers us another chance—not because time itself saves us, but because God is faithful across time. Even when hope feels exhausted, God provides renewal through grace, community, and shared mission.

So as we step into another season, may we not abandon one another. May we remain engaged, faithful, and generous. And may our life together proclaim that, in Christ, hope is always renewed—not in isolation, but in love, service, and community.

Valdir Franca

MEET OUR ELDERS



CLASS OF 2026



Luis Carranza



Princess
Mompremier



Scott
MacDonald



David
Peterson



Bill Tenney

CLASS OF 2027



Barbara
Biggart



Marcia
Cannata



Joshua
Harford



Grace Moore



Dan Thorogood

CLASS OF 2028



Melissa
Gracey



Candida
Langsdale



Donna
Lengahan



Laura Reich

MEET OUR DEACONS



CLASS OF 2026



Bob Bourne



Elizabeth
Burkins



Debbie
Carreiro



Jay Weaver

CLASS OF 2027



Jodi Grace



Mirja Nissen



Sharon
Wallen



Elenor Smikle

CLASS OF 2028



Abraham
Aluicio



Robert
Burkins



Joanne
Kerbawy



Mari Mejia



MSPCS NEWS

**Dear MSPC Community:
We are One.**

December at MSPCS was truly filled with the Christmas spirit, full of joy, celebration, and fellowship. Festive decorations and cheerful songs set the tone as we kicked off the month by hosting a breakfast at our Miami Shores Community Alliance Meeting, where our kindergarten students sang their "Gratitude" song beautifully. We shared smiles during our special Elf Express, delivering Secret Santa gifts to participating staff. Our Christmas program, themed "He Is the Reason for the Season," showcased our students from Nursery through 5th grade as they sang and danced in celebration of Christ. After the performance, our MSPCS Parent Association sponsored a joyful gathering with hot cocoa, Santa's special appearance to take photos, beautiful hand-made ornaments that decorated the huge tree between the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, cookie decorating, and snow fun. Together, we felt the love of our families, Commission, Church, staff, and students. Truly a season of joy in the Lord and remembering that Jesus is the Reason for the Season.

From our entire MSPCS Staff and I, we wish you and your families a blessed and Joyous New Year!





Finding Grace in the Upside Down

By Lisa Sullivan (Spoiler Alerts)

Netflix's most viewed show is the global phenomenon *Stranger Things*. Subtitled into 22 different languages, Christian themes like—light and darkness, evil and faith, love, sacrifice, and redemption—shape the beginning and end of this epic, ten-year adventure.

Stranger Things is set in small-town America in the 1980s, a time before the internet, cell phones, and social media. Given our heavy, tech-integrated lives today, that world now feels so far away.

The adventure begins with four endearing middle-school students. Later, friends and family join forces as they confront a dark government program and monsters too great to overcome alone. Not unlike disciples, the characters are always acting on incomplete information. They stumble through complicated problems. They risk their lives. They act in faith to save one another and resist evil. The socially awkward “nerds” become the heroes. The great biblical theme of love—anchored in friendship and self-sacrifice—is inseparable from their actions.

Viewers are often granted access into the inner lives of the characters: daily routines, thoughts, and emotions. The antagonist carried a terrible memory—a childhood tragedy, a soul wound never shared, treated or healed. Eventually he succumbed to dark forces that compelled him toward evil. He believed the darkness needed him—and he needed it. In contrast, another character overcame the darkness, but how? Friendship, love.

Stranger Things writers treated their characters much like biblical ones, with danger, moral dilemmas, no easy answers or neatly wrapped up lives. There are loose ends. No fairy tale endings. This is the life of faith: seeing only partially, acting without fully understanding, holding fast to one another, to hope and promise.

As final episodes aired, fans hotly debated which character would meet an early death. Collectively, we held our breath. Any of them could have been killed, the destroyer literally at the door. But in the end, all fan theories were wrong. The party survives. There was a collective exhale, it felt like they were marked by grace. Against all odds—they made it. Days after the show ended, a particular biblical theme came into view..., “While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction, so that Scripture would be fulfilled.” John 17:12. “I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost.” Acts 27:22.

Ms. Sullivan

(Ms. Sullivan is a Social Studies educator at St. Mary Cathedral Catholic School and a member and collaborative contributor to the Ministry of MSPC)

Upcoming Dates & Events

First Sunday of the Month: Pass It On Collection,
Chapman Partnership & Safespace Donation

Sundays: 10 AM Adult Bible Study - Library

Sundays: 10:30 AM Nursery (Up to 4 Years)

Sundays: 11 AM Worship Service

Sundays: 11:15 AM Children's Church - Library

Sundays: 12:15 PM Fellowship Hour

Saturdays: 9:00 AM Anti-Racism Book Club

Wednesdays: 9:00 AM Soft Dolls - Room 135

Thursdays: MSPC Children's Choir (Check Times)

Monday, January 19th: Birthday of **Martin Luther King Jr.** (Church Office Closed)

Wednesday, February 18th: ASH WEDNESDAY

Children's Choirs

Every Thursday

- K-3th Grade, 3:15 PM
- 4th - 5th Grade, 4:15 PM

Choir meets only on scheduled school days. There will be no choir during MSPCS breaks, holidays, or on Thursdays when school shows are held.

Church singing: First (mostly) Sunday of every month.

Miami Shores Presbyterian Church

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The Light Staff -January 2026

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