

SEPTEMBER 2026



MIAMI SHORES
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE LIGHT



Pastor's Page with Rev. Dr. Valdir Franca

Before the Coffee Gets Cold: Walking Together into Grace

I came across *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, by Toshikazu Kawaguchi, in a bookstore in Aventura, almost by accident. I had stopped to browse and found myself in a conversation with the person selling the books about Gabriel García Márquez and his posthumously published novel, *Until August*. From that conversation, I was introduced to Kawaguchi and to a world of Japanese literature I had never explored before.

What fascinated me was the unexpected familiarity. Kawaguchi's imaginative writing brought me to that same edge of reality and imagination that I have so often found in García Márquez. Both writers seem to suggest that sometimes we need imagination—not to escape reality, but to approach it differently, especially when reality is painful.

In Kawaguchi's story, there is a café where, under very particular conditions, a person can travel back in time. But there are rules: you cannot change the past, and you must return before the coffee gets cold. Beneath this imaginative idea are very real human experiences—love, regret, grief, loneliness, reconciliation, and the longing to have one more conversation with someone we love.

The remarkable thing is that traveling into the past does not change what happened. It changes the person who makes the journey. Perhaps this is what good literature does for us. It gives us enough imagination to approach realities that are sometimes too painful to face directly. Beauty does not erase suffering, but it can help us find a way through it.

This has made me think again about Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel, that we have heard so many times that sometimes we stop hearing them. We know the Beatitudes, the parables, and the Lord's Prayer so well that their beauty can become hidden beneath familiarity and, sometimes, beneath our rigid religiosity.

We can turn poetry into doctrine, invitation into obligation, and mystery into certainty.

But Jesus' words were meant to be lived: **"Blessed are the merciful" Blessed are the peacemakers." "Do not worry about tomorrow." "Come to me, all you that are weary"** These are words that can take us by the hand.

Matthew's Gospel is also the story of a community in transition. For the first time, Matthew uses the word *ekklesia*—the church, the community called together. This community was living through enormous change. The old world was disappearing, and there was no simple way to return to what had been before. They had to move forward.

Perhaps this is where Matthew speaks powerfully to us today. Churches, families, and communities also experience seasons when the only way forward is forward. We may grieve what has been lost, but eventually we must learn to walk into a future we cannot yet see.

We do not always walk confidently. Sometimes we stumble, hesitate, and carry grief and questions with us. But we can move forward knowing that we do not have to make the journey alone.

This is what Jesus seems to be teaching Matthew's community: the church is not a gathering of people who have everything figured out. It is a community learning to walk together—people who are different, people who disagree, people carrying wounds and memories, people who have been here for generations and people who have just arrived.

What holds us together is not sameness. It is Jesus!

And so, before the coffee gets cold, perhaps the invitation is simple: **Be here. Be present. Be together. Hold someone's hand. Listen. Forgive. Welcome. Make room at the table.**

We cannot change yesterday, but we can choose what we will do with this moment. So, before the coffee gets cold, let us be here. Let us be together. Let us hold hands and follow Jesus—walking graciously into the future, trusting that wherever the road takes us, **God's grace will be there before us.**

Rev. Dr. Valdir Franca



MIAMI SHORES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

G. I. F. T. S. - Growing In Faith Through Stewardship

Miami Shores Presbyterian Church • 2027 Stewardship Campaign

2027 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN



September 13 – November 1st

This is our church. Its future belongs to all of us.

Through our gifts, we help sustain the worship, ministries, mission, fellowship and people that make Miami Shores Presbyterian Church a place of faith and community.



Our 2027 Stewardship Goal:

\$235,000

Be on the lookout for more details.

Mission Corner

by Marta Lavandier

SCHOOL SUPPLIES DRIVE

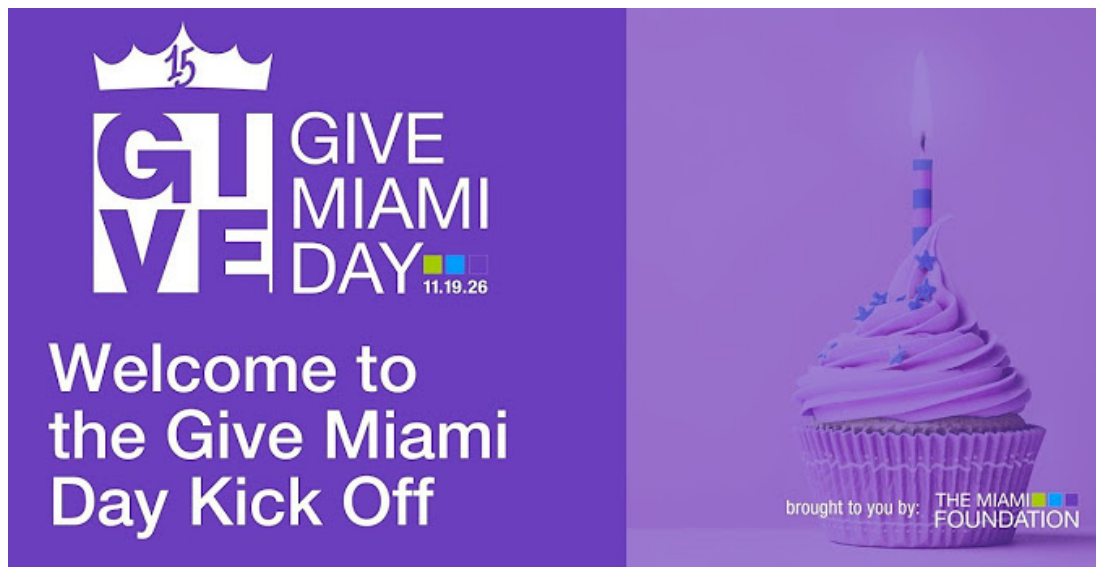
Thank you to everyone that donated cash, supplies, backpacks and helped fill 180 backpacks (a new record!) for students in our community. Your generosity will make many children happy and be prepared to learn this school year! Pastor Franca blesses the children, parents and backpacks and wished them a successful academic year..



PACKAGES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

The Missions Committee is sending care packages to our members attending undergraduate and graduate programs, trade schools, and military academies. The packages will be mailed in mid-October. The packages are sent at no cost to you. They contain healthy snacks, a gift card, and a letter from Pastor Franca. Please send the name and address to Marta Lavandier at MLavandier2000@yahoo.com by October 4th.

GIVE MIAMI DAY 2026



MSPC is participating in Give Miami Day. The county-wide fundraiser that benefits local nonprofits like our church. This year your donation will benefit special music during the holidays, clean, refurbish or replace appliances in the church kitchen, and campus beautification. Give Miami Day is Thursday November 19.

OUR MISSION IN ACTION

Mark your calendar! The Missions Committee has several upcoming events and opportunities. On **September 6**, information about the House of Hope (HOH) plates will be shared at the luncheon. On **September 13**, join us for the Missions Luncheon in the Fellowship Hall. Then, on **September 27**, Mark, the leading representative at Frontera, will join us to share more about Frontera and its mission. Stay tuned for more details! For questions, please contact Luis Carranza or Joshua Hartford.

GARDEN MINISTRY

The Garden Ministry has planting beds available for MSPC members to grow their own vegetables, herbs and flowers. The planting season starts Nov. 1 to June 1. The cost is \$60 for each planting bed. Sign up after the church service on October 4 or contact Marta Lavandier at MLavandier2000@yahoo.com or Yvonne Moyer at moyeryt@aol.com

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP!

We have started the process of selecting new elders and deacons for the 2027-2029 term. Here is the schedule:

We will be accepting nominations for elders and deacons through September 18th. Elders are elected members who guide the church's spiritual life, governance and mission. Deacons are elected members who serve a ministry of compassion, service and care. Please send an email to Carol in the church office with your nominations.

On Sunday, September 13, we will hold a congregational meeting for you to confirm Luis Carranza as an at-large member of the committee.

The committee will work through mid-October to choose four elder candidates, four deacon candidates and three 2027 nominating committee members. This slate will be brought to the congregation for a vote on Sunday, November 1.

Please help us identify members who would bring their time and talents to MSPC and participate in the life of the church. Thanks in advance!

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARIA RODRIGUEZ, OUR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Maria became a United States citizen on August 28, 2026. She came to this country from Manizales, Colombia, in 2013. She resided in Washington, D.C., for several years before moving to Miami.

She loves America. It has become her home, the place she chooses to be. It is a land of opportunity, a country where you can grow and become the person you want to be.

She is a proud citizen, and her friends and family at MSPC are proud of her. Congratulations, Maria!





MSPCS NEWS

A New School Year Begins



The Miami Shores Presbyterian Church School is one of our largest ongoing mission projects, and we are excited to see another school year underway. The school year kicked off a few weeks ago, and everyone is off to an exciting start!

In addition to our kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school, the preschool offers educational programs for children from nursery through PK4. We currently have open spots, so if you know someone who is looking for a safe, nurturing environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive, please encourage them to reach out and schedule a tour.

As the school year continues and the music program gets going, we look forward to welcoming the children into our Sunday services and seeing them become an active part of our church community.

A special thank-you goes to all of our teachers and volunteers who give their time, energy, and dedication to making the Miami Shores Presbyterian Church School such an amazing mission.

***MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
PUMPKINS ARE ALMOST HERE!
Our Pumpkin Patch starts October 3rd!
Stay tuned for more details!***

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

SEPTEMBER 13 TO NOVEMBER 1:

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3: PUMPKIN UNLOADING
DAY - PUMPKIN PATCH**

✨ **Share Your Light!** ✨

*Have a story, reflection, or
idea you'd love to share?
Interested in being featured
in The Light?*

We'd love to hear from you!

*Send your questions or
article submissions to
mrodriguez@mspc.net for a
chance to be published in an
upcoming edition.*

Let your voice shine! 🧡

The Light Staff - September 2026

Maria A Rodriguez, Editor
Rev. Dr. Valdir França, Contributor
Marta Lavandier, Photographer &
Contributor
Carol Wilde, Contributor
Melissa Gracey, Contributor

Miami Shores Presbyterian Church

Miami Shores Presbyterian Church
602 NE 96th Street, Miami Shores, FL 33138
305-754-9541 | www.mspc.net

