



2024-2025

Elder Candidates

**IGNITING A PASSION FOR JESUS IN CONNECTICUT,
NEW ENGLAND AND AROUND THE WORLD.**

Our members will vote to affirm Bryan Ayer, Juan Cardona, John Dischinger, Clarence Haynes and Andy McCann at the June 9 Annual Meeting. They will join the existing Elder Board of 12 members.

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Bryan & Valerie Ayer

From Bethel

Bryan, who was born and raised in Florida, knew that God protected him as a youth from accidents that could have maimed or killed him, but he didn't surrender his life to Jesus until he was an adult. "I experienced a roller-coaster life of happiness and sadness, with no real joy or lasting peace. I knew that God must have created me for more. Once I got off the throne and surrendered to God's Kingship, He began to mold me into a vessel for His use and glory. When I'm tempted to resume my perfectionist/double-minded ways, the Word — especially Philippians 4:6 — has been the lamp to my path and the light to my way."

Bryan and his wife, Valerie, have been coming to Walnut Hill since 2010 and reside in Bethel. As a former chairman and member of the Elder Board, Bryan is excited about continuing his service to the Lord and his church as we walk in this new season of faith and promise. "While change and uncertainty are constants in our lives, we serve a God who is faithful, goes with us and will never leave nor forsake us."

With a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in marketing, Bryan works as a sales operations manager for Beiersdorf in Stamford. In his spare time, he loves spending time with Valerie and sons, Matthew and Kai. He also enjoys reading; watching football, tennis and other sports; and being a life-long learner.



Juan & Carmen Cardona

From Woodbury

Growing up in Colombia without a father, Juan witnessed people following traditions over true belief, which made him very skeptical about God. Years later, Juan was impacted by his wife's unwavering faith and prayer life when their son Andy was born premature and spent 75 days in the neo-natal Intensive care unit after suffering life-threatening cranial hemorrhages. "I witnessed the power of prayer through our son's miracle. Today I can see God every day in our lives. He is our provider, King and Savior. When I see our son serve at church, I see God's infinite power."

The main thing that attracted Juan and his family to Walnut Hill is that the church goes beyond preaching the Gospel by serving the community and helping those in need. "Mark 9:35 and Romans 15:1 are at the core of our household. I am looking forward to serving on the Elder Board in any way that helps our church continue to grow while maintaining those values of humbly meeting the needs of others."

Juan has a deep love for music. He serves on the worship team at the Bethel and New Milford Campuses. He also volunteers at the Café, and he and his family are regular participants in all the Special Needs Ministry events and activities. Carmen serves as a greeter on Sunday mornings. Juan has an associate of applied science degree from the NY Institute of Technology and is a systems analyst for Montefiore Hospital.



John & Karen Dischinger

From Danbury

While on staff from 2012 to 2022, John headed up our Care, Church in Action and Marriage Ministries and has been instrumental in the growth of our Food Pantry. He and Karen mentor couples, facilitate The Marriage Course and provide pre-marriage support. John is the Board Chair of The Underground New England, which fights human trafficking in CT. He served as the Joni & Friends Family Retreat Pastor in New Hampshire and Thailand. Karen served alongside him on these trips and represented Walnut Hill on training and equipping visits with World Relief staff and the local pastors in Rwanda and the DRC. Karen has also been a longtime volunteer at the Food Pantry and in the nursery.

John stepped into a relationship with Jesus at 19; however, his daily and intentional walk with the Lord didn't start until after he experienced the challenges that come with marriage and having a family. "Jesus is everything to me. He has helped me work on my character defects, enabling me to love Him, my wife and my family even more."

During his free time, John enjoys spending time with his four grandchildren, as well as biking, hiking and kayaking with Karen. He also loves woodworking, home repair and fishing. John looks forward to being an Elder "during this exciting yet critical time in the life of our church as we undergo a leadership transition and witness the communities we live in face daily life pressures. We need to be a beacon of light on a hilltop."



Clarence & Diana Haynes

From Bethel

One thing Clarence has learned repeatedly since surrendering his life to Jesus at age 6 is that Jesus is his source and can be trusted completely. Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, Clarence has witnessed God's faithfulness through the ups and downs of life. "The Lord has remained true to His Word and His promises. There is no greater joy in life than knowing that Jesus walks with me through all the seasons of life."

Clarence, who has a bachelor's degree in business management and finance, is pursuing a master's degree in instructional design and learning technology. He is an instructor of financial education and planning for Edelman Financial Engines.

At Walnut Hill, Clarence is a member of the worship team, and Diana serves at the Welcome Spot. In addition, Clarence started The Bible Study Club, an online Bible Study designed to encourage believers to read their Bible, discover truth in it and apply it to their lives. He writes articles for Biblestudytools.com, Christianity.com, iBelieve.com and Crosswalk.com. He enjoys watching the NY Giants, cooking, writing and playing the piano.

"My heart has always been to help people grow in their walk with Jesus. I am looking forward to serving as an Elder at Walnut Hill and being able to share from the variety of experiences I have had in both leading and serving throughout the years."



Andy & Jeanna McCann

From Bethel

After high school, Andy started to study the Bible more intently and better understand God's love and Jesus' sacrifice for him. He was touched deeply by the Holy Spirit at a Church service and was baptized at 22. "Still immature in my walk, I spent years knowing Jesus' love for me through justification but was very spiritually lazy and not leaning on the Holy Spirit to be sanctified. In the past 10 years, I have come to know what it really means to seek, serve and surrender to Jesus and how much I need Him every hour. It's not about me. It's about Him in every facet of my life."

The McCanns, who have been coming to Walnut Hill since 2014, reside in Bethel with their three children. They host and co-lead a Community Group, volunteer in the Children's Ministry and are part of the Waterbury leadership team. They are involved in Foster Care, and Jeanna works with Urban Alliance and World Vision. As an Elder, Andy looks forward to seeing all the campuses work as one Church, one congregation and one family. He also wants to learn from the other Elders, deepen his prayer life and be a better evangelist.

Andy has a master's degree in economics and a bachelor's degree in business administration. Spending time with his family is a top priority. He also enjoys hiking, swimming, back yard fun, drawing, painting, playing board games, watching movies, hiking, horology and working on cars.

Elders are elected by the congregation and given authority to:

Oversee
the church

Provide
spiritual leadership
and oversight

Scripturally
shepherd the
care of the church

Oversee
the teaching of
the Word of God

Guard the
purity of the
doctrine and the
life of the church

Discipline
church members
in accordance with
the Word of God

Counsel
those in need

Comfort
the sick

Pray

In all congregational matters, the congregation is to be accountable to the care and leadership of the Board of Elders as the Elders themselves are accountable to Christ.



CENTRAL OFFICE

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