



2024

Annual Report

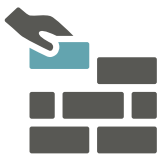
IGNITING A PASSION FOR JESUS
IN CONNECTICUT, NEW ENGLAND
AND AROUND THE WORLD.



SEEKING GOD



**CARING FOR
ONE ANOTHER**



**SERVING
TOGETHER**



REACHING OUT

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MESSAGE FROM THE ELDER CHAIRMAN

On behalf of the Elder Board and in the words of the Apostle Paul writing to the church in Colosse, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” I trust that you are receiving this note in a posture of Arising and Shining and that you are living “*la vida abundante*” – the abundant life by the power of Holy Spirit.

We deeply appreciate your faithful attendance, generous giving and joyful service this year. Your commitment has been a cornerstone of our community’s strength. We also extend our gratitude to our Lead Pastors, Adam and Craig, whose faithful leadership and vision have guided us through this season. Additionally, we commend our dedicated staff, who have unwaveringly and tirelessly supported God’s work throughout all our campuses.

In this year of transition, Walnut Hill Community Church has sought to advance the Kingdom of God while simultaneously conducting our search for a new Lead Pastor, Teaching. We have witnessed growth and increased effectiveness in many ministries, such as Special Needs, Marriage and the Food Pantry, to name a few. Each of our ministries plays a vital role in fulfilling the church’s mission, and your dedication to them is deeply appreciated.

I also want to thank you for your prayerful support for our Search Team and Elder Board as we pressed into the process of discerning the Lord’s provision of our next Lead Pastor, Teaching. We are beyond thankful to welcome Rev. Dr. Shawn Winters and his wife, Becky, to our community and are most excited to step into a fresh chapter of igniting a passion for Jesus in Connecticut, New England and around the world.

Finally, as Paul reminds his readers in Ephesus, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

In Christ,



Scott Rupff
Elder Chairman

LEAD PASTOR NOTE

Walnut Hill Family,

It has truly been a remarkable year, and we are grateful for your love, support and encouragement as you have wholeheartedly pursued Jesus, genuinely cared for one another, passionately served the Lord and taken bold steps to shine for Him. As we step back and look at all that God has done in and through His Church, we cannot help but give Him praise and express our great appreciation for you!

Our prayer for this year has been for the Lord to enable us as a Christian community to freshly Arise and Shine – to learn what it means to be Church in today’s culture so that we not only experience abundant life personally but are also impassioned and emboldened to bring the love and hope of Jesus to our families, friends, neighbors, coworkers, communities and world.

This year’s Annual Report is a testimony – a simple snapshot – of the mighty work of God in our midst. As you read through it and see the great impact taking place, we pray that you will be encouraged, challenged, inspired and led to worship God with gratitude in your heart.

As we look forward, we are struck with the strong sense that God will continue the momentum that has begun this year in ways we could never imagine. So please be in prayer. Ask God to fill you with even greater love and power. Go into your days prepared and expectant for how He will work through you. And commit to being part of what God is doing at Walnut Hill in this next chapter. As your Lead Pastors, we couldn’t be more excited to step into this next season together!

To God be the glory in His Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen!



Adam DePasquale
Lead Pastor, Executive



Craig Mowrey
Lead Pastor, Development



WE ARE ARISING!

As a church, we committed to a yearlong journey to learn:

How to **arise** and **re-engage in Christian community** for support, encouragement and personal transformation.

How to be **people of integrity** as we shine in a world that embraces different values.

How to **rely on the Holy Spirit** as we arise to share Jesus with others.

How to receive **strength and care** from Jesus as we live for Him.

How we are called to **shine brightly and radiate truth** with grace and humility.

Turn the page to read stories and more of God at work over the Arise and Shine year!



SEEKING GOD

Seeking God means every person engaged in the transformative power and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This happens through:

Transformative Biblical Preaching

Wholehearted Worship

Sacrificial Prayer

Intentional Discipleship

We are arising and shining through seeking God...

- » **104** baptized across our campuses
- » **47** new members
- » **2,226** weekly attenders at Sunday services
- » **675** involved in adult discipleship groups and classes (Men's, Women's, Senior Adults, Community Groups, Young Adults, Word by Word class, Follow Jesus class)
- » **795** newcomers across all campuses

During one of our Community Group meetings, we were reading about miraculous stories in the book of Acts. We recognized that living in privileged America means we don't experience much of the persecution that the apostles did, but we also miss out on many of the healings and miracles. Just then, Tim came in, dripping in sweat, with a heavy heart for his friend who was about to lose his wife if she did not receive a liver THAT NIGHT. We laid hands on Tim and started praying. We prayed for some time — for Tim, for Darnel and his wife, for their children, for God's Kingdom to come and for a liver. We continued praying sporadically over the next hour of our time together, and God answered our prayers! She received a liver! God received the glory, and we got to experience His miraculous working in our midst. Don't lose heart. God is at work. He cares! He heals!



Lisa Avery
New Milford Campus Community Group

During the Arise and Shine season, I've experienced God's presence more deeply in my life after deciding to prioritize following Jesus above all things. Over the past year, God has surrounded me with community, positioned me to encounter and hear life-altering testimonies, and placed mentors along my spiritual journey to teach and guide me. Surrendering to His will, I've asked for guidance and witnessed Him removing unwanted elements from my life while providing me with so much more. He has blessed me financially in remarkable ways, leading me to reduce my workload, deepen my faith, engage more with my church family through being present for worship, and serve the church community. Despite navigating through a challenging season, my connection with God deepened, providing so much comfort, love and a sense of companionship that I never had before. God has already surpassed my expectations, reaffirming that placing my trust in Him will only continue to bless me.



Angelica Sampson
Valley Campus





I never truly understood what consistency was while growing up. When I was 8, my father overdosed and was in and out of rehab. So when my friend offered to take me to church, I was scared that it would leave me more broken. Not only did it change my perspective of God and His never-ending love, but it also showed me what it feels like to be part of a community. God worked through my friend to bring me to Walnut Hill so I could see what He really stands for. From someone who has been hurt by the church before, I know it's scary but God wants you to come as you are, and He wants your heart as it is now. If I could slightly affect someone the way the worship team has, my pastors have and my friends have, I'd be so blessed. It would take me a thousand years to repay the youth ministry for the amazing family they've given me.



Alina Tejada
Bethel Campus

The online community embraced the message of Arise and Shine. In Bible studies, prayer groups and faithful volunteerism, we sought to deepen our relationships with God. In a study of Acts, we were inspired by the early Christians, who were willing to risk it all to follow Jesus. We were challenged to ask ourselves the question, "Do we believe Jesus enough to do the same?" We also studied ways to have a stronger prayer life that could hear and implement God's plans.

Online participants did not just hear the Word. We also developed and shared prayer request lists; joined intercessory prayer groups for the lost, prodigals, children and families; and faithfully volunteered online as hosts and prayer servants. We are continuing to pursue opportunities to develop stronger relationships with God and each other, as we partner with the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel with the world.



Nonna Neal
Online Campus

- As a church, we studied through **4** sermon series, with our Abundant Life series highlighting **8** different languages spoken by our church family.
- **42** people took our Jesus, Sex and Gender class this fall, which provided a safe place for people of all ages to have important conversations around God's design for identity and sexuality in today's world.
- **18** Community Groups took in the Acts study, learning about modeling God's love and sharing Christ from the early Church.
- **8** Arise and Shine Prayer Gatherings took place monthly praying on topics such as thanksgiving, repentance, our Lead Pastor Teaching search, Israel, marriages, evangelism, Church in Action, Christmas events and abundant life.
- **131** men gathered for a Thanksgiving Dinner focused on God's faithfulness and arising in thankfulness.
- Over **100** women attended a livestream of the IF:Gathering at the Bethel Campus where they joined with women around the world to worship and grow in Jesus.
- We hosted our **first** Spoken Word open mic nights, inviting artists from our church and community to share their creative gifts.
- Over **100** middle and high schoolers attended Winter Weekend, where **3** students surrendered their lives to Jesus for the first time.
- **2** art shows were exhibited at the Bethel Campus featuring **35** Walnut Hill artists.



CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Caring for one another means we are committed to equipping and revitalizing our families for Kingdom impact and growth. This happens through:

- Relevant Marriage and Family Resources**
- Compassion-Driven Care Ministries**
- Championing a Multicultural Ministry**

We are arising and shining through caring for one another...

- » **91** ministered to through care ministries (Celebrate Recovery, DivorceCare, GriefShare, cancer support, mental health support, CAP, and marriage mentoring and counseling)
- » **69** helped through benevolence
- » **132** hospital/home visits
- » **4** weddings and **7** memorials



My world was turned upside down last year when I received an unfortunate medical diagnosis. A dear friend directed me to the Care Team, who worked to meet my vast needs. By providing practical things, such as meals and rides to appointments, they stepped in to alleviate some of the burden. Mental, emotional and spiritual needs were harder to fix, but perhaps the most meaningful help was their desire to meet me where I was at and sit in the mess with me. Even when there was nothing they could say or do to change my situation, they were not afraid to walk through the hard questions and emotions with me when I didn't have the faith to be hopeful. I was always treated with dignity rather than pity, which was so important to me. I will always be grateful that they didn't run from the complexities of my situation and feelings, but rather leaned in closer.



Sara Spranzman
Bethel Campus

I grew up in church, but I lost my faith when my wife had miscarriages and we went through a separation. However, one day I heard a good story about Walnut Hill Community Church come across the radio. I said to myself, what's the worst that can happen, and I decided to go to church that Sunday. Since then, I have felt like I was part of a family and have joined the men's group on Thursdays. I find time to help out where I can and attend services on Sundays. The worship and the family atmosphere are so amazing. It feels good to be treated like family in a church that truly cares about you instead of being treated like just another person in a seat. I have grown so much in the past six months spiritually, and I am looking forward to joining the worship team soon. Thank God for what He is doing at Walnut Hill!



Kyle Pimenta
Valley Campus



Walnut Hill saved my life. After 33 years of an unhappy marriage, I saw that the church offered a DivorceCare group. I spoke with Lucy Houghton, the Director of Care Ministries, who prayed over the phone for me because I was so distraught. I was very touched by her compassion. The DivorceCare leaders were empathetic and supportive. I also found comfort from the group members, and I received encouragement from the weekly video and workbook. I began attending the church services with a few from the group, and we would share more afterward in the Cafe. Through the church's sermons, I learned more about having a relationship with God, and I surrendered my life to Jesus! I joined the Food Pantry and the Second Sunday Prayer Group, and I participated in the Acts study. The love, kindness and compassion of this church have kept me going. I thank God for putting these people in my path.



Judy Micceri
Bethel Campus

Marriage is often depicted as a blissful union and a journey filled with love and joy. But as every married couple knows, it is also a journey filled with challenges and relationship hurdles to overcome. My spouse and I were no exception, despite over 50 years together. We found ourselves communicating awkwardly at times with inaccurate assumptions and unspoken issues. The Marriage Course has had a transformative impact. It has equipped us with useful tools and insights to negotiate the complexities of married life with grace, resilience and, above all, love in a thoughtful, at times lighthearted and biblical environment. I urge couples to take this course as a journey of healing and growth. Caution: There may be tears. By working through shared struggles, we emerge stronger, wiser and more deeply connected than ever before.



Nelson Malwitz
Bethel Campus

- We hosted our first Finance Seminar where **149** attendees gained wisdom on topics such as budgeting, paying for college, getting out of debt, saving for retirement and more.
- **43** couples participated in our online Marriage Course where they received practical support to strengthen and build their relationships.
- **41** senior adults gathered monthly for Bible study and JOY Fellowship Luncheons at the Bethel Campus.
- We hosted our **first** XO Marriage Conference.
- Our Celebrate Recovery (CR) leadership provided support and training to **14** CR groups across CT.

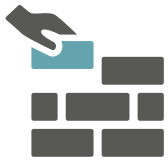
Growing in Diversity

DID YOU KNOW...

Walnut Hill has a Diversity Advisory Team made up of a dozen members who work to support our desire to be a church where everyone can feel welcomed and at home.

This year, we introduced an app called Worldly, which allows us to translate the 11 a.m. sermon in Bethel into over 50 languages.

Our Special Needs Ministry **began a Caregivers Support Group** that meets twice a month and reaches families locally and regionally.



SERVING TOGETHER

Serving together means having a thriving lay leadership empowering every generation for ministry and mission. This happens through:

Vibrant Children's and Youth Ministries

Dynamic Leadership Development

Strategic Mobilization of God's People

We are arising and shining through serving together...

When I volunteer at the Café on Sunday mornings, I feel very good about helping and serving other people, and knowing that I'm needed. I like seeing how happy people are after getting a drink before or after the services. I also enjoy getting to know more people in the church. By serving, God shows me how much He loves me and how He cares for other people. I enjoy learning about new drinks and how I can be more creative and artistic when I make drinks for people.

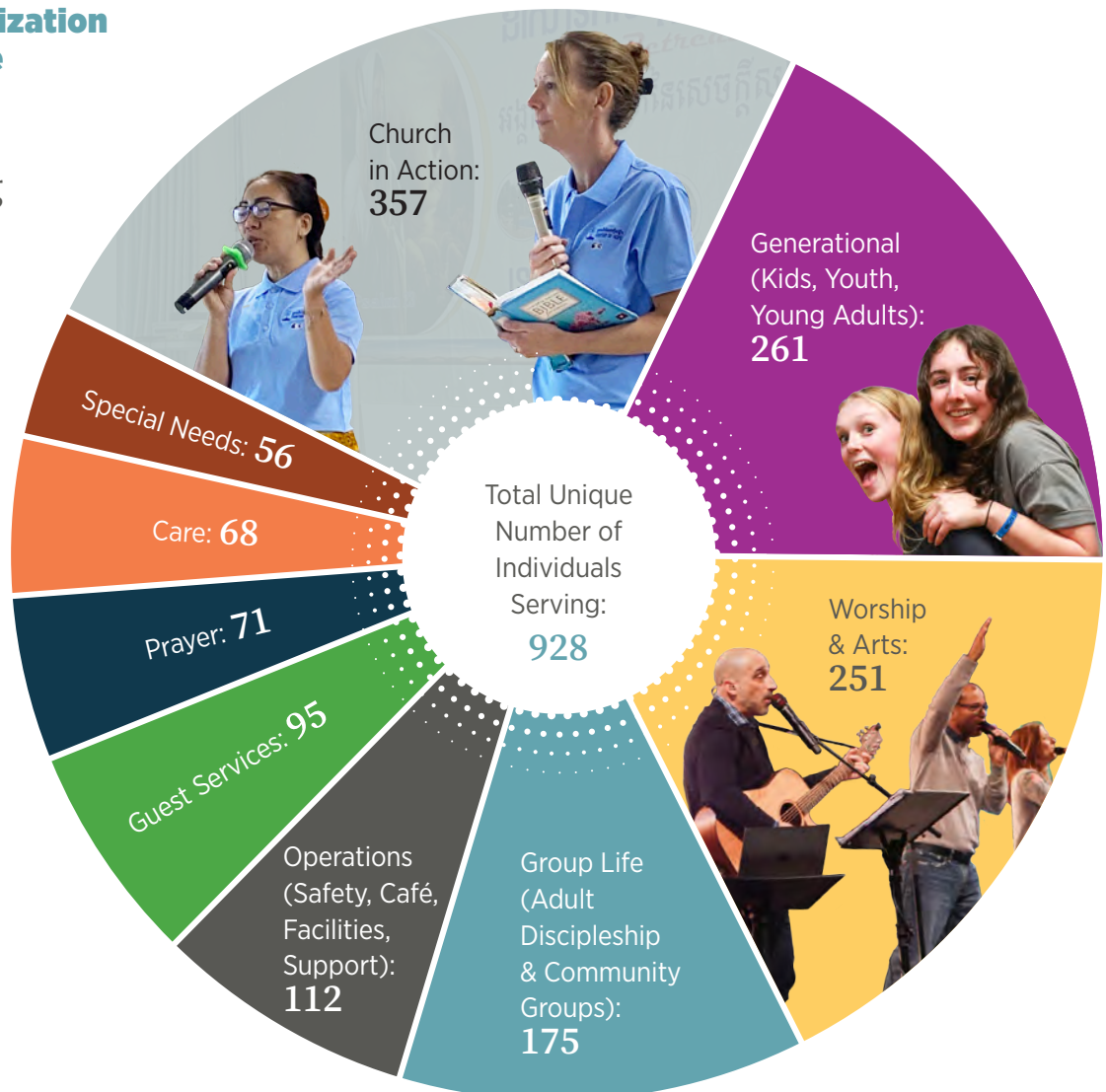


Andrew Hsieh
Bethel Campus

As greeters, we try to be Christ-like and serve just as Jesus Himself served. We love to talk and listen to people. Thank you for the opportunity to serve!



Daniel & Debra Roberts
Waterbury Campus





DID YOU KNOW...

Our intern and residency program equipped 7 young leaders over the past year who helped enable ministry and further the mission of Walnut Hill in key ministry areas.

Over 60 volunteers a week serve in Kids and Youth Ministries across our campuses every Sunday, giving kids and parents the opportunity to hear God's Word and grow in Jesus.

Over 15 prayer servants minister across our campuses each weekend through prayer requests for healing, restoration, wisdom, peace and protection.

Since joining Walnut Hill in 2014, I've witnessed God's grace profoundly. Amid life's challenges, Walnut Hill has been a steadfast support for my family and me, nurturing our spiritual growth. The Worship Team has always inspired me, igniting a desire to return. As the transition began to take place last year, I felt a divine nudge — a real, physical poke in the chest: "Now it's your time." I realized that the worship team would need help. Answering the call, I dedicated myself to practicing and auditioned three months later. Serving on the team is a personal joy and a spiritual fulfillment. Collaborating with talented musicians and singers is a privilege; however, more importantly, it allows God's people to worship Him fully. Seeing God glorified and souls uplifted reaffirms His presence. I'm deeply grateful to my church family for entrusting me with this role and for their participation in worship. Together, we experience the beauty of God's work in our midst.



Greg Sullivan
Bethel Campus



Pete Flores
Waterbury Campus

The Lord has blessed me to be able to gather His men and speak to them about Jesus Christ. He has given me the strength to be patient and calm while sharing with men who want to know about His sacrifice for our sins. Jesus has given me grace to be understanding toward the men in their time of need and to show how proud I am to know Him. I will forever proclaim that Jesus has changed my life from the past. Thank you, Jesus!



REACHING OUT

Reaching out means three million people around the world encountering Jesus through a growing number of local and global partnerships and campus community engagement. This happens through:

- Authentic Evangelism**
- Effective Community Engagement**
- Strategic Campus Development**
- Missional Collaboration**

We are arising and shining through reaching out...

- » **84** Yellow Flowers (lives surrendered to Jesus)
- » **288** kids at **8** camps/trips
- » Approximately **893,000** pounds of food given out to nearly **1,500** families a month during **36** food pantries at our Bethel and Valley Campuses
- » **42** Church in Action ministries in **26** countries
- » **3** Walnut Hill teams providing spiritual refreshment to partners (Balkans, Cambodia, Elam Ministries)
- » **416** families gave **\$547,500** to support our Church in Action partners (Church in Action is a separate fund supported through donations.)



As Walnut Hill called its members to be beacons of light in our community through the “Arise and Shine” sermon series, an army of workers and volunteers gathered to host the annual Happy Hearts event at the Amber Room. What a blessing it was to see so many members of the New England special needs community forget their woes for an outstanding time of games, fellowship and dancing! We are so grateful for everyone who worked to make it happen and exemplify what it means to shine the light of Jesus in our community. We will never forget the happiness on our son’s face.



Juan & Carmen Cardona
Bethel Campus

The 2023 Charlie Brown Christmas concert at the new Milford Campus was incredible! The house was full without an empty seat, which was an answer to our Leadership Team’s prayers. Many regular Walnut Hill attendees from across our campuses came, as well as many newcomers who otherwise might not have entered the doors of a church service. The message of the Good News of Jesus, the Son of God coming into the world to save the lost, was powerfully preached by Linus and Pastor Brian Bergen. All glory to the Prince of Peace.



Chris Jennings
New Milford Campus



DID YOU KNOW...

Walnut Hill is a Regional Resource.



We continue to support Greenwood's Community Church

in MA with preaching as we partner with them, Converge and Valley Community Baptist Church in planting a church in Great Barrington, MA.

Walnut Hill holds regular gatherings throughout Litchfield County to strengthen and support pastors in rural communities.

Our pastors stay active in New England through our partnership with Vision New England and Joni and Friends.

We served as a resource to dozens of churches this year, providing wisdom and advice in areas related to special needs, prayer ministry, kids and youth, technology, HR, governance, facilities, administration, safety, translation, and more.

I decided to go on the West Virginia mission trip at the last minute. I was hesitant because I didn't know anyone, but I had faith in what God had in store for me. The first two days were filled with manual labor, and a lot of us were losing sight of our purpose. On the third day, a few of us went off base to do gardening. There, I had a very impactful conversation with Ms. Terry, who owned the garden. I was so moved by her faith in God, and she was moved by our willingness to help. That's when I realized that our work mattered. It helped people in ways we may not have been able to see. After that, I experienced more conversations like this, and I saw the hearts of my fellow youth change as they had similar experiences. I went on the trip feeling out of place, and I left with lifelong connections and a reignited passion for serving God by serving others.



Celine Assahoua
Waterbury Campus

Our family attended the Waterbury Trunk-or-Treat for the first time this year and served together at the event. All the volunteers prayed together before the event for the community to feel God's presence, supernatural love and peace. Despite the line and crowd as thousands of kids made their way through over 20 decorated cars, games and entertainment, it really was amazing to see and feel the joy and peace being shared by the community and our church members. Each child was told how happy we were they were there, and each family was warmly invited to our church. The following day we had 10 new families attend our service! It was awesome to be part of such a special event and to see our church shine its light on our community. Thank you to all the people who came out and volunteered that day, including those from our other campuses!



Andy & Jeanna McCann
Waterbury Campus

- Waterbury's Trunk-or-Treat had **4,000** people come through with **30** of those families having visited the campus since the event.
- Our Bethel Pumpkin Fest and Valley Fall Festival saw **hundreds** of families attend and enjoy fall fun.
- **530** women from our church and community filled the room at the Advent Breakfast.
- Our Kids Camp had a blast with **170** kids served by **115** volunteers.
- Our Christmas Concert Series (Jason Gray & Aaron Shust, Charlie Brown Christmas and Handel's Messiah) and "The Importance of Being Earnest" fall play saw over **1,500** audience members, many coming through our doors for the first time and several having visited our Sunday morning services since.
- Our first community Happy Hearts Lunch saw **185** individuals and families impacted by special needs come out for a special afternoon where they felt loved and cared for.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19a)

As we have journeyed together through the Arise and Shine year, many people have shared with us the great sense of momentum they feel and see taking place. We agree and could not be more excited and expectant for what God will do in this next season!

Here are the top five things we’re excited about for 2024-2025:

Welcoming Shawn Onto the Lead Pastor Team

As Shawn and Becky join our family, we look forward to a fresh season in preaching and discipleship and all they will bring to the life of the church! In preparation for the launch of our fall season in September, the Lead Pastors are meeting together to pray over biblical themes and discuss key events and initiatives. Please keep them in your prayers.

Supporting the Growth We Are Seeing at Each of Our Campuses

As God builds and strengthens His Church, we want to be faithful in supporting His work. Seeing attendance grow and ministries flourish, our pastors and directors are praying about and discussing ways we can be even more effective. We plan on mobilizing and investing in volunteers, developing more leaders, and creating additional space and opportunities for people to connect to community and grow in their faith.

Freshly Shining Into Our Communities

We want to find new ways to support and cheer on each of us as we share Jesus among our friends, neighbors, workplaces, schools and communities. Prayerfully, this includes the launch of Walnut Hill’s first church plant where, in partnership with Converge and Valley Community Baptist Church, a new church is being birthed in Great Barrington, MA!

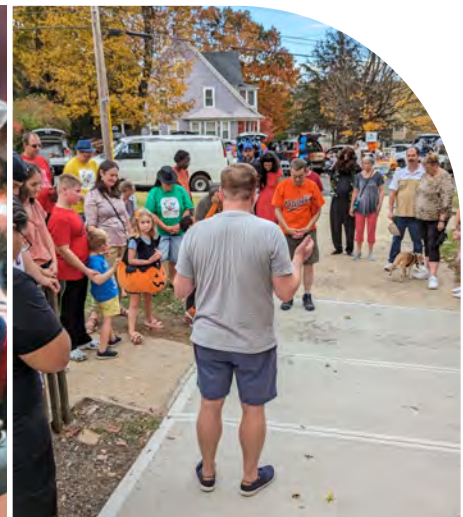
Dreaming Together

Whether it be seeing more people meet and grow in Jesus, more people healed and set free, more people find a home within our church family or our communities transformed by the love of God, we want to dream together and seek God for fresh ways to do His work and bring Heaven to earth!

Preparing the Way for All God Has in Store

We need your help!

- Please **pray** and ask God to do more than we can ask or imagine!
- Get involved and **wholeheartedly serve** in the areas of your passion and giftedness.
- Commit to **give generously** and support God’s work through Walnut Hill in Connecticut, New England and around the world!
- **Protect our unity** by keeping Jesus the center of your life, being a compassionate listener and speaking well of one another.



OUR LEADERSHIP & STAFF

OUR LEADERSHIP



Adam DePasquale
Lead Pastor, Executive
adepasquale@walnuthillcc.org



Craig Mowrey
Lead Pastor, Development
cmowrey@walnuthillcc.org



Shawn Winters
Lead Pastor, Teaching
(Starting July)

PASTORS & DIRECTORS



Nick Barnett
Property Management Director
nbarnett@walnuthillcc.org



Lynne Bauman
Pastor of Women and
Care Team Leader
lbauman@walnuthillcc.org



Brian Bergen
New Milford Campus and
Young Adult Pastor
bbergen@walnuthillcc.org



Jim Bray
Pastor of Care
jbray@walnuthillcc.org



Bryan Cerrone
Waterbury Campus Pastor
bcerrone@walnuthillcc.org



Christopher Ellington
Production Director
cellington@walnuthillcc.org



Crystal Ellington
Pastor of Prayer and
Online Campus
crystal@walnuthillcc.org



Greg Flower
Youth Pastor
gflower@walnuthillcc.org



Craig Horne
Pastor of Leadership Development
chorne@walnuthillcc.org



Lucy Houghton
Director of Care Ministries
lhoughton@walnuthillcc.org



Andy Karam
Men's Ministry Director
akaram@walnuthillcc.org



Steve Martin
Director of Strategic Initiatives
smartin@walnuthillcc.org



Connie McFarland
Communications Director
cmcfarland@walnuthillcc.org



Joshua Multunas
Valley Campus Pastor
jmultunas@walnuthillcc.org



Clay Norman
Staff Chaplain
cnorman@walnuthillcc.org



Doug Palmer
Finance and HR Director
dpalmer@walnuthillcc.org



Ray Pennoyer
Waterbury Associate Pastor
rpennoyer@walnuthillcc.org



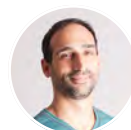
Brian Prue
Pastor of Spiritual Growth
bprue@walnuthillcc.org



Melena Sorena
Special Needs Director
msorena@walnuthillcc.org



Lance Sven
Lead Youth Pastor
lsven@walnuthillcc.org



Chris Vitarello
Associate Worship Director
cvitarello@walnuthillcc.org



A PRAYER OF BLESSING

As we reflect on the past year,
We are humbled and thankful
For all God chose to accomplish through Walnut Hill.
Thank you to each and every volunteer and staff member
Who has invested their time, energy and finances,
Who has prayed and sought the Lord's guidance
On how to be a family.
We are a family.
A family that seeks God,
Reaches out,
Serves together and
Cares for one another.
With great expectation and anticipation,
We offer ourselves anew,
With arms spread wide
Ready to receive all that God has in store
For the year to come.
May we hear His voice loudly and clearly
Guiding us through the days ahead,
Confident in His promise that
The best is yet to come.

CENTRAL OFFICE

156 Walnut Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801 | 203-796-7373 | walnuthillcc.org