

July 2025 will mark the beginning of my fifteenth year in full-time ministry; it is also the month my husband Mark and I will celebrate nineteen years of marriage. Our blended family includes five grown children and eleven grandchildren. Mark is retired from a career in parking, and we live with two friendly dogs. Four of our children live within a two-hour drive; our youngest lives in Brooklyn, NY. I was raised in a small farming community and although Mark was raised in the city of Chicago, we both enjoy small town life.

I enjoy teaching and preaching, and I believe that worship - no matter what style - should be thoughtfully designed, meaningful, and inspirational for the congregation. My passion is 'Doing Life Together' with others in community, encouraging people to develop their unique gifts as we all seek to live into our callings as Christians. I celebrate the diversity God infuses into our world and our congregations. My leadership style is collaborative, and I believe a pastor's role is to nurture and equip laity to fully participate in the ministries of the church and become ambassadors of Christ's love in the world. I also think of this process as an adventure! I believe the Spirit of God leads us beyond what is familiar and comfortable as we explore new ways of putting faith into action and connecting with those outside the walls of the church. I am eager to hear your stories – both your personal stories and the stories of the church as we serve the larger community together.

I think some of the important work of ministry is to create safe spaces where people are encouraged to be honest about their challenges, doubts, and struggles. As we learn to authentically explore and ask good questions, we grow in faith. In the process of both giving *and* receiving, we grow spiritually and encounter God's presence more fully.

I am grateful for the opportunity to take a couple weeks off before I begin preaching in mid-July. This will allow me to work toward completing a big project, so I can be fully present as I start my time at Poplar Grove UMC. I am also thankful for the warm welcome already provided during my transition into your beautiful parsonage. Diana and Daniel Saavedra, Dave Gronceski, Sue Hanson, Phil Keithley, and Amy Ekberg have been supportive and encouraging in their practical assistance. I look forward to meeting everyone and starting this journey with you!

