

The Associate Minister Search Committee of Asylum Hill Congregational Church proudly introduces



Rev. Lara W. Franklin

The Associate Minister Search Committee is pleased to introduce Rev. Lara Whitley Franklin.

Lara was born in Houston, although she did not “officially” live in Texas until she was sixteen years old. Rather, as the elder of two sisters in an Army family, she called Oklahoma, South Carolina, Hawaii, Alabama, Kansas, and Germany home. And, as is the case for many military families living overseas, vacations afforded opportunities to experience many more states and countries. It was just before Lara began her junior year in high school that her family returned to Texas and she completed high school in Huntsville.

Lara’s professional career has been an interesting journey of service, through which she has witnessed extremes of human behavior and experience. Lara graduated from Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, in 1992 where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and German, and completed a semester of work at the University of Osnabrück in northern Germany. She earned her Master of Divinity degree from Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, graduating first among the class of 2005.

Following graduation from Southwestern University, Lara (then Whitley) took a position with the Texas Department of Human Services investigating allegations of child abuse

and neglect. After earning her Texas Peace Officer license, she moved to the Williamson County Sheriff’s Department where she served two years as a patrol officer and eight years as a sergeant investigator assigned to the unit that dealt with child abuse, sexual assault, and death investigations. During this time, she trained as a mental health officer and hostage negotiator. Sgt. Whitley earned the Advanced Peace Officer’s Licenses, as well as certification as a Police Instructor, taught sexual assault investigation, interview and interrogation technique, report-writing, and family violence intervention.

During her transition from law enforcement to full-time



ministry, Lara served as a bereavement facilitator and tissue donor coordinator for the Central Texas Blood and Tissue Center in Austin.

Lara has always been energized by travel, and is ready to experience new people and places. Her early life experiences fostered in Lara a deep appreciation for diverse cultures and customs, and she loves to discover the unexpected opportunities new experiences afford. She marked her 40th birthday backpacking alone in Italy, and has led four pilgrimages to the Holy Land since 2006. Her hobbies and interests include scuba diving, cycling, hiking, reading, and quilting.

Lara married Rev. Travis Franklin in January 2014, and they welcomed a

daughter in July 2015. In April 2021, Travis was diagnosed with Stage 4 Glioblastoma Multiforme; death came as a merciful release on March 3, 2022.

In July of that year, Lara was appointed by the United Methodist Church to serve as the Executive Director of Clergy Leadership and Administration, a cabinet level position in Texas in which she was responsible for the support and continued growth of regional clergy. She remained in that position until July 2023 when she took a transitional leave to relocate with her young daughter, Erin, to Connecticut.

Erin is a 9 year old fourth grader who loves math and reading, basketball and softball, traveling, and all things Roblox.

All are invited and encouraged to attend worship on Sunday, September 29, 2024 to hear Lara preach and participate in a congregational meeting to vote on the recommendation of the Search Committee.

Associate Minister Search Committee:

Lenell Kittlitz, Chair
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