



## Gretchen Schoon Tanis

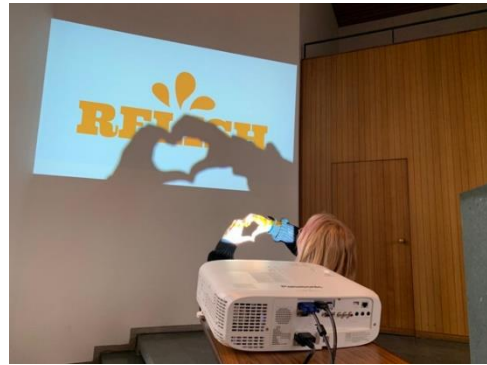
### A glimpse at what your support made possible:

It is my great honor and privilege to share a couple of stories of celebration as well as challenges that we have faced in the RELISH community this year. I am incredibly grateful for the honor and blessing it has been to serve as pastor of this incredible part of the body of Christ.

- **The beginning of youth group for teenagers** – it is exciting that RELISH has grown now to include enough teenagers to start a youth group! We also, thanks to God, have adults who are not only willing to help lead this group, but have previous experience in youth ministries of various forms to begin our new group! We had a great first outing with kids from Namibia, India, and the U.S., as well as leaders from Kenya and Scotland.



- **Christmas Traditions** – we were also able to continue our Christmas traditions this year by celebrating a Christingle service on the morning of 24 December. Part of this worship service includes writing prayer requests and forming them into a Christmas chain where it hangs throughout the Christmas season on the tree in the sanctuary. People look forward to both things in our Christmas service every year.



*My brother in law Joel Schoon Tanis joined me as a worship leader in late April. He and I did the sermon together while he painted and I spoke. That was fun!*

### **Our challenges of 2023**

I would say the war in the Middle East between Hamas and Israel has created a lot of tension within the city of Hannover as well as Germany as a whole. In our congregation, we have both a colleague from the World Communion of Reformed Churches who is Palestinian, as well as a congregant who was formerly married to an Israeli man with whom she has a daughter. That has led to some tense and emotional times for these individuals, however, and I think this is a small miracle of God—it has led to some incredible moments of dialogue and extensions of grace through hard conversations.

### **Please Pray**

In the coming year, RELISH will go through a time of transition as our family comes to the end of our term, and our new partners—Jeff and Chelsea Lampen—begin. It will be of utmost importance that this season of transition is covered in prayer, as it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we finish well, and the Lampens begin with energy and grace. Please pray that the community of RELISH continues with a welcoming spirit that has been part of our DNA from the beginning—for both new families and individuals moving into the Hannover area which includes their new pastors!



Please also pray that God would open doors for new areas of mission and ministry for our family. We look forward to moving back to the West Michigan area (to be closer to our families, which includes our mothers who are aging) and look forward to seeing what God has in store for us. Please also pray for our son Jon who graduates from high school in June 2024 and looks forward to the next adventure of university or a gap year. Please pray for our daughter M.E. as she starts in the American school system as a freshman in high school. Pray her transition is a smooth one as well!