

Dear Members of First Presbyterian Church:

My name is Michael Honeycutt. Marcia Lorimer and I have been honored to serve as co-chairs of the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC).

Other members of the APNC include:

Laura Hanson

Keith Merritt

Griffin Momsen - Hudson

Cris Rivera

Amy Wilson

Marcia and I would like to acknowledge the diligence and hard work of all of the committee members as we carefully considered FPC's needs and our strategic plan for the future. This process took dedication, prayerful insights, discussion, and willingness to patiently listen for the Holy Spirit so that we might discern the best candidate for our call.

When the APNC began our work in January, little did we know of the challenges that COVID-19 would present to us. Your APNC analyzed each challenge and developed strategies that would work so that the process would not be delayed.

We made a commitment to transparency and communication and endeavored to keep the congregation regularly updated as to our work and timeline.

We reached out to a wide range of faith leaders across the country to assure that our search for a new Associate Pastor was known to a diverse group and that it was clear that First Presbyterian sought to know of candidates across the spectrum of race, gender, ethnic, and sexual orientation.

After reviewing the applications, sermons, and writings of 40+ candidates from across the country (but mainly east of the Mississippi) we then narrowed the field and conducted Zoom

interviews, reviewed written answers to specific questions and again looked at sermons and writings.

Our discernment process led us to a final group who we were able to bring to Durham and meet within socially-distant and appropriate ways.

These individuals had the opportunity to see Durham and our church, to meet with our Head of Staff and Associate Pastor, and to meet with the APNC as a committee and in smaller groups. We also engaged with a wide range of references for each of our three finalists.

After that, the APNC continued its prayerful discernment, engaged in deep and earnest conversations, respectfully challenged one another and ourselves, and made the commitment to have the final piece of the puzzle be a fit that would benefit the membership of our church and the community. Most importantly, we listened to and found ourselves guided by the Holy Spirit in our decision-making.

Those things brought us to a unanimous decision to nominate as our next Associate Pastor, Reverend Mitzi Lesher-Thomas.

We are excited for folks to see how wonderfully Mitzi complements our current pastoral staff in terms of spiritual gifts. We know that her passion in guiding congregants in personal spiritual development, in cultivating lay leadership, and especially in supporting families and individuals in their pastoral care needs, will be a gift to this congregation for many years to come. We on the APNC are particularly impressed with Mitzi's ability to engage quickly, fully, and authentically with seemingly everyone with whom she interacts. She firmly believes that worship should embody the joy that is the Risen Christ.

The attached profile provides you a brief overview of Mitzi's background. We look forward to the congregation approving her nomination and that we may welcome Mitzi to her new ministry here at First Presbyterian Church on October 19.

It has been our honor to be a part of this APNC and we are confident and joyful in our nomination of Mitzi. Coming into her new role at First Presbyterian Church will have challenges for all of us as we move forward in this time of COVID. It will require some new and creative ways to become acquainted and to welcome Mitzi into our church family. But we know we can do it! Please be open to new opportunities that will present themselves in this introductory process and know that if you have ideas as to how we can best do it, we hope that you will share them with us.

This is a blessed and exciting time in the life of our church. We acknowledge and thank Mindy Douglas and John Weicher – and all the FPC staff and lay leaders – who have shepherded the congregation in these challenging times of 2020. We thank God for bringing Mitzi and First Presbyterian Church together and we joyfully anticipate continuing to celebrate and strengthen Love in the Heart of Durham.

On behalf of Amy, Cris, Griffin, Keith, and Laura we say thank you for the trust and faith you placed in us.

Marcia Lorimer

APNC Co-Chair

Michael Honeycutt

APNC Co-Chair