

September 15, 2019

Dear friends in Christ,

In 1992, the Spirit called my husband and myself to a deeper spiritual life of service, first through seminary, and three years later, into parish ministry together. And now, that same Spirit, whose still small voice we hear and honor, is calling us both out of ministry and into a new phase of life. So it is with a strange mixture of joy and grief, that I announce to the Session, to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church, and to the Presbytery of New Hope, my retirement from the Ministry of Word and Sacrament as of December 31, 2019. When Hedge and I were ordained together as a team on January 24, 1996, our then six-year-old, Stuart, commented, "I think I just saw Mom and Dad get married"! He was amazingly perceptive, as we certainly hitched ourselves to the Bride of Christ, the Church, for just shy of 24 years.

When I was called to First Presbyterian Church in 2003 as a Temporary Stated Supply Associate Pastor, Joe Harvard said to me, "Look, I'm getting ready to retire, and I think we could have some fun together as colleagues before that happens." Little did I know, that we would have so much fun, that he wouldn't step down until ten years later! Then during the interim period between pastors, I felt called again by the Spirit, to stay in place and provide the nurture and stability that the church needed during that time of transition. And likewise, when Mindy Douglas was chosen to be the new Pastor/Head of Staff in 2016, I felt the Spirit's whisper to make sure that Mindy had all the grounding and support she needed to assume leadership of this congregation, including the sabbatical which she postponed upon coming to FPC. And now, here we are, thriving under Mindy's gifted and insightful leadership, with a congregation very much engaged in the demonstration of the Kingdom through your good words and works of life together. And now, my call is complete. I feel like I have fought the good fight and run the good race, and it's time to hang up my sneakers.

It is with gratitude to God and deep thanksgiving towards you, the members of First Presbyterian Church, that I announce my retirement. It has been a lovely season of ministry with you, and it has gone by quickly, or so it seems. Nevertheless, I feel that I am leaving you in very capable hands, and I will continue to pray for all the saints who call this place home.

With abiding appreciation,

Marilyn T. Hedgpeth

Associate Pastor