Pastoral Letter

June 16, 2026

Dear friends,

I can't believe it. Kathy Parkins has retired! It really happened. It was a beautiful service and a super-fun party. In case you missed it, I have a few clips to share with you.

> First, the whole service: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tJyfRgMJV4

Next, the clip of the choir singing an "Ode to Kathy" to the tune "Hymn to Joy" from the email.

Finally, my words to Kathy (there were other speakers, listed below – ask them for their words, too!):

Marilyn Hedgpeth used to help us deal with the comings and goings of church members who had become family by using the metaphor of a train – "People get on the train. People get off the train," she would say.

Kathy Parkins got on the train back in 1978. She served for four years, disembarked, and then returned in 1998 to serve as the Minister of Music for another 28 years.

I want you to note the importance of her title. She was not the Director of Music.

Directors direct. She has been the Minister of Music. Ministers serve. They minister to the needs of the people. She did this abundantly – through her music in worship and through her pastoral care for the choir.

As you all know, her gifts extend far beyond her incredible skill at the organ and her gift for bringing beautiful music out of a choir.

She has a deep and abiding devotion to a gracious, loving, generous, and inclusive God.

She knows hymn tunes, texts, prayers and Bible passages intimately. They are her close friends and accompany her daily through life.

She cares deeply for people of all ages and cares for her choir members with intention, pastoral sensitivity, and kindness.

She is also an incredible colleague and friend.

With Kathy, every day we have worked together in ministry at FPC has been an adventure, in the best way. Like a river, she changes daily, but the river that is her life is always, even in the most frenetic times, a river of peace and love, joy and song, devotion and wisdom.

We will never know how many lives Kathy has changed with her welcoming spirit, compassionate heart, and musical leadership. God alone knows the full impact of her gifts on this community and city. But we know the impact she has had on us. I know the impact she has had on me. Kathy, you are a gift and we let you go, but not before you know that, like a river, you have changed us in beautiful and profound ways.

Thank you, Godspeed, and come back soon. We love you.

We all wish Kathy the greatest blessings in her retirement. We also know that Kathy is not likely to slow down anytime soon! We look forward to seeing her around and being church with her in new and different ways.

Please know that the search committee continues to be hard at work to find Kathy's successor. We want to find the next right person to continue to lead us in musical excellence for years to come. In the in-between time, we will have guest organists leading worship, including Fred Mason, Gordon Campbell and Tom Bloom (who retires from his Business Administration position in two weeks!). We are grateful for these gifted organists who will help us through this transition.

Additional speakers at Kathy's retirement celebration were Karen Romines, Aaron Lesher (former FPC member), Dan Huff, Joe Harvard, Lesley Curtis, and Lewis Moore (St. Philip's Episcopal Church organist). Esther Hethcox and Lori Pistor (former associate pastor at FPC) also gave prayers/blessings.

Grace and peace to you,

Mindy