

January 6, 2021



2344 Center Street
Bethlehem, PA 18017

To the families of the First Presbyterian Preschool and members of our congregation:

We are writing to let you know that Andrea Barbehenn, long-time director of our Preschool & Extended Care Program, has announced her retirement as of June 30, 2021. It has been accepted by the Session with thanks and deep gratitude for her many years of service.

Andie has been affiliated with our program for 35 years, as a parent, teacher, director – and more recently as a grandparent. In that time, she has led our school as a consistently well-regarded early childhood program in our community, and her leadership has been especially appreciated during the many challenges of 2020.

The Rev. J.C. Austin, Senior Pastor at First Pres, issued this statement:

Andie's leadership of the First Presbyterian Church Preschool is an extraordinary testament of faithfulness in so many ways. For over three decades, she has nurtured our children, supported our teachers, cared for our families, and cultivated a school environment of curiosity, creativity, and love.

It is a legacy that is also a strong foundation for the Preschool's future. The Preschool is a beloved and powerful expression of our congregation's ministry; I want to thank Andie for her stewardship of it so well, for so long, and I look forward to what the next chapter in the Preschool life and leadership will be.

And Rebecca Gorton, Chair of the Preschool Task Force, shares:

Andie's spirit-led leadership provided continuity and consistency for FPCB's Preschool program while keeping it relevant for children in a changing world. Her dedication, spirit, and love will be missed.

Going forward, FPCB's Personnel Committee will be working alongside representatives from the program to craft a job description and implement a search for a suitable candidate. Both internal and external candidates will be welcomed for consideration for this important position.

Sarah Baer, Chair of the FPCB Preschool Parent Advisory Board, writes:

We have been so fortunate for Andie's tireless work, her outstanding commitment to the program, and her love and compassion for all of the children and families she has touched over the past 35 years! On behalf of the Preschool Parent Advisory Board, I want to extend Andie all best wishes for her well-deserved retirement, and look forward to the next chapter in the life of our beloved Preschool. Through the upcoming change in leadership, we can be confident that the care, compassion, and education our children receive, and that has become synonymous with this program, will remain unwavering.

And let's give Andie "the last word":

I've been part of the FPC Preschool staff for 35 years, and I retire with many mixed emotions. Some of my earlier students are now back with their children! I've loved teaching, leading, and keeping our Preschool developmentally appropriate while keeping up with the changing demands of education.

But most of all I've loved all these children, and teaching them about the love of God. I'll miss many things, but it's time for me to step down and move on. I give thanks for all of you, all the children and families I've had the privilege of knowing and loving, and for the best staff around.

Please join us in thanking Andie, and congratulating her on this next step in her personal journey. We will keep you apprised of plans to celebrate her retirement as a community.

Sincerely,

Rev. J.C. Austin
Senior Pastor
First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem

Sarah Baer
Chair
FPCB Preschool Parent Advisory Board

Rebecca Gorton
Chair
FPCB Preschool Task Force