

August 26, 2019

First Presbyterian Church
Durham, N. C.

Dear Friends,

Change is always both an opportunity and a challenge, and changes that involve farewells are even more laden with mixed feelings. Not surprisingly, then, I discovered a measure of ambivalence in writing this letter to you. I have asked the Presbytery of New Hope, Pastor/Head of Staff, Mindy Douglas, Our Session to accept my letter of retirement as Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian effective December 31, 2019 as I seek honorable retirement. I take this step with great confidence that this community—as it faces the exciting challenges of the long-range planning process—will continue to thrive and grow.

Nonetheless, I must admit to feeling what I believe is an appropriate sadness when I think about letting go of a ministry that has been fulfilling and rewarding far beyond anything I might have expected when I began my service here nearly 14 years ago. I am grateful for so many people past and present for the support that has allowed me to do the privileged work of pastoral care in your midst. Joe Harvard, Marilyn Hedgepeth, Paul Baldasare and staff welcomed me and helped me to “fit” here in so many ways. Marilyn and I worked closely together in the many transitions that led to the search committee call of Mindy Douglas to be our Head of Staff. Thank you, Marilyn. Mindy and her staff have truly included me in collaborative service since her appointment and for which I am so thankful. But it goes without saying, of course, that my colleagues on staff and so many of you who have shared the Lord’s work with me in ways large and small, have supported me as we have sought to listen faithfully and respond graciously to God’s call.

My work at Duke has recently involved a growing level of responsibility, and I plan on continuing to play what I believe is an important role there in helping our Duke-Durham partnership make this community a place where every individual is given opportunities for growth and development. In December I will celebrate my 75th birthday and 50th years of ordination and this milestone deserves, I believe, a pause to reflect on the many, many blessings of God’s grace in my life. Sheila and I will be back in the pews with you in due course, but in the meantime I know you will continue to hold me in your prayers, as you will be in mine. I am certain that God still holds in store for all of us many unexpected blessings.

With gratitude and love,

Sam R. Miglarese
Associate Pastor