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July 31, 2020

Dear First Presbyterian Church family:

We are writing to you today with important and exciting news about the future of our church.

As you know, an Administrative Commission of our Peace River Presbytery has been working for nearly two months to guide us through this transitional period. The five members have spent countless hours meeting with Session, staff, and members of our congregation, and then assimilating all that information into a plan for First Presbyterian. We are deeply grateful for their faithfulness to this immense task.

At Tuesday night's stated meeting of session, the Administrative Commission presented this plan. It has two main provisions: the endorsement of Session's choice for Transitional Pastor, and a process that could allow the Rev. Kelly Fitzgerald to return to her ministry at First Presbyterian.

The Session is pleased that the Commission approved our selection of the Rev. Margaret LaMotte Torrence as transitional pastor and head of staff. We strongly believe Margaret is the ideal person to step into this role. As you may know, Margaret grew up in First Presbyterian. She is the daughter of Olivia LaMotte and the Rev. John H. LaMotte, who served as head pastor from 1969 to 1983. She has remained connected to the church over the years, and recently served as our interim associate pastor, from January to September 2016.

Margaret has told us she feels called to return to First Presbyterian at this time, and Session is impressed with her wisdom, her knowledge of our community and history, her calming influence and her ability to be an agent for needed change. Margaret is moving here from North Carolina and will join us on September 8. She will serve until we are able to complete a search and call an Installed Pastor/Head of Staff.

The Commission also set forth a "road map" that may allow Rev. Fitzgerald to continue her service with us. With the Commission's guidance, First Presbyterian will create the new position of Designated Associate Pastor. Kelly is eligible to apply for the position. A search committee, including members of Session and the Commission, will interview all candidates in September, and then call the designated associate pastor at a later date. The Commission will appoint a support and accountability team to mentor and periodically evaluate the designated associate pastor, in order to ensure the pastor has the greatest chance for success.

The Administrative Commission has spoken with Kelly, and tells us that she is eager to go forward with this plan.

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We know these last five months have been trying for our church family. You have felt shock, confusion, frustration and worse. Today we can tell you that we have taken the first and most important steps to emerge from uncertainty, and we are confident that First Presbyterian will be stronger, more vibrant, and, as always, will embody the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

We again want to thank the members of the Administrative Commission. These five people have shared with us their wisdom, their heart, their patience and their devotion. They have taken on this challenge with grace, and their work is far from finished. We are eager to continue to work with them going forward.

In faith,

The Session of First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota

## ROAD MAP FORWARD

August	<p><b>DEVELOP JOB DESCRIPTION</b></p> <p>The Session and its Personnel Committee will develop a Position Description for the Designated Associate Pastor.</p> <p>Many have acknowledged that the current Associate Pastor Job Description needed to be re-worked. Having a realistic job description with specific priorities and areas of responsibility will benefit the Designated Associate Pastor, the Session, and the Congregation.</p> <p>Normally, the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry approves Job Descriptions for Designated Pastors. In this situation, the Presbytery has designated the Administrative Commission to approve the Job Description, which will help expedite this process.</p>
August	<p><b>APPOINT SUPPORT/ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM</b></p> <p>The Administrative Commission will appoint a Support/Accountability Team to work with Designated Associate Pastor. The purpose of this team will be to give support and to provide transparent and constructive feedback to the Designated Associate Pastor. The Transitional Pastor will be a part of this Support/Accountability Team, with additional members representing the Session, FPC Congregation, and Presbytery. The Administrative Commission (having listened to many people in the FPC congregation) will prayerfully select members of this team who will bring objectivity and a heart for building healthy, sustainable ministry for the Designated Associate Pastor and for FPC.</p>
Early September	<p><b>TRANSITIONAL PASTOR BEGINS</b></p> <p>The Administrative Commission endorses the Session's choice of the Rev. Margaret LaMotte Torrence as FPC's Transitional Pastor. She has agreed to serve, and has chosen September 8 as the date to begin her ministry at First Presbyterian Church.</p>
September	<p><b>INTERVIEWS FOR DESIGNATED ASSOCIATE PASTOR</b></p> <p>A search team with representatives from both the congregation and the Administrative Commission would conduct interviews with potential candidates, who have submitted Personal Information Forms (PIF) to assess fit and make sure that there is clarity about both the responsibilities and accountabilities of the position. The Rev. Kelly Fitzgerald is eligible to be considered for this position.</p>
Date TBD	<p><b>CALL DESIGNATED ASSOCIATE PASTOR</b></p> <p>Once all polity steps are finalized, the Transitional Pastor and Session will establish a start date for the Designated Associate Pastor.</p>