



# First Presbyterian Church

*Hearts Open to Christ • Doors Opening to His World*

20 Kings Highway East  
Haddonfield, New Jersey 08033

April 6, 2020

Dear Fellow Members of FPCH:

On behalf of the Personnel Committee I am pleased to let you know that we have completed our search for a Transitional Pastor. We have extended Terms of Call to The Reverend Dr. Douglas D. Gerds, currently the Senior Pastor/Head of Staff at First & Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington DE.

Doug's candidacy was approved by the Session in March and he received approval from the Presbytery's Commission on Ministry last week. (Congregational approval is not required for Transitional Pastors). Doug has accepted the Call and will begin with us on June 22, 2020. Doug will be available to serve as Transitional Pastor for as long as it takes to fill the Senior Pastor role, typically 12-18 months. Doug plans to use the apartment in the Wezner House so he can be part of the Haddonfield community 3-4 nights a week.

The Personnel Committee wholeheartedly supported Doug's candidacy. Here are some of the reasons the Personnel Committee was attracted to Doug:

## **Strong Staff and Leadership Skills**

- Doug has been Pastor/Head of Staff in medium and large size congregations for 20 years including 6 years at a congregation larger than ours. Doug has also successfully led transition efforts in the past
- Doug is bright and insightful which will help us as we prepare for a new Senior Pastor.
- Doug has a strong Accounting background and has served as Treasurer of his Presbytery.
- Prior to ordination, Doug held an executive role overseeing more than 1,000 employees.

## **Preaching, Worship, Mission and Pastoral Care**

- Doug delivered inspirational homilies at both worship services that we observed. His interaction with the congregation was warm, relaxed and engaged.
- Doug told us that he likes to deliver homilies that call for action on the part of the congregants, often connected to their tasks in the Church or their Mission to the world
- The Music Program at both Worship Services was excellent and reminiscent of our commitment to music during worship

- Doug spoke often about the joy he receives from giving Pastoral Care.
- Doug provides strong leadership in Mission and gave us examples of how he helped his congregation see new mission opportunities and inspired them to move quickly when opportunities and needs arrived.

Hopefully this summary gives you comfort that Doug will be an excellent steward of FPCH. I encourage you to reach out to Doug to welcome him at: [fpchaddonfield@gmail.com](mailto:fpchaddonfield@gmail.com).

And lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Personnel Committee: Clair Blank, Margot Dark, Rachel Davis, Jim Groeling, Gerry Rice, and Bill Wright for their insight, the depth of their questioning and the gift of their valuable time during the search.

Sincerely,

Paul Urian on behalf of the Personnel Committee

May 16, 2020

Dear friends!

When I think about the current season in which we find ourselves, two words keep popping up: new and different.

For you — a new Associate Pastor and a new Transitional Pastor which will lead to some new and different ways of doing things — at a minimum, different voices in the pulpit and worship leadership. You've already adapted to a new and very different way of saying a "Phase One" fond farewell to Bill (the parade made the local news even here in the strange little land of Delaware!) and of welcoming Nikki to your church family. Unprecedented and without much, if any, guidance, your good and generous nature rose to the challenges with creativity and love.



For me — I'm saying goodbye to a church I've served for 17 years where the relationship between congregation and pastor is not unlike what I know of yours. It's hard to leave yet I sense very clearly that God is beckoning me to head for the Commodore Barry Bridge and find my way to a vibrant, healthy, and eager gathering of Presbyterians in Haddonfield and do everything I can to prepare them for their next installed Senior Pastor. The venue is new and different as are the people, the challenges, the joys, and the celebrations.

While I can't definitively predict how things are going to unfold for all of us, these things I do know:

We will serve God's people with exuberance and extravagant love.

We will care for one another with hearts full of compassion and forbearance.

We will seek to follow Christ with study, prayer, and service.

In all of it — and this is a non-negotiable — we will have fun. Plain, ordinary, uncomplicated fun. So often I think we take church far too seriously and forget that God seeks our delight in worship and service. I promise we will have fun and relish the sound of much laughter.

I can't wait to meet all of you and mark the day that not everything is so new and different.

Be well and God bless,

Doug

## **Biography**

### **Douglas D. Gerds**

I was born and raised in and around New York City until my teenage years when I moved to a Detroit suburb. During high school, I attended Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, MI; first as a day student, and finishing as a boarder. Following graduation, I continued my westward migration and settled in Santa Barbara, CA., where I attended the University of California, majoring in Business Economics with the intention of becoming an accountant.

My career in the hotel business began during college when I was hired by a young entrepreneur with a vision of restoring classic small resorts on the California coast. I shared that dream and we worked together for 14 years, renovating and building a dozen hotels ranging from exclusive coastal resorts in the west to large convention hotels in Arizona, Colorado, and the east coast. It was during that time that I married and began a family.

As our children reached school age, we sensed a need to relocate to a more “family-friendly”; environment and eventually relocated to Lexington, KY. It was there that I surrendered to a nagging push to ministry that I first recognized while attending a Congregational church in Santa Barbara.

After seminary I was called by Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church in Lexington as their Associate Pastor. That community of faith has been, and continues to be, defined by joy, movement of the Spirit, and risk-filled forays in the search of justice. I served for from 1997 to 2001 when I accepted an interim/transitional position with First Presbyterian in Maysville, KY; a small historic city perched on the Ohio River. Serving the congregation of that city-center church was a time of growth and energy heightened by a strong sense of heritage and tradition.

From July of 2003 until June of 2020 I served as Pastor/Head of Staff of First & Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, DE. That inclusive community of gifted and diverse people continually challenged and cared for one another and the city in exciting and creative ways. It was a privilege to serve among people of faith with a passion for justice, inclusion, and equality.

In June of 2020, I began as Transitional Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield, NJ, and look forward to serving with the congregation as it moves through the process of calling their next installed Senior Pastor.

To further my skills and proficiency in ministry, I received a Doctor of Ministry degree in 2008 from Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster, PA. My dissertation was focused on Urban Ministry.

My initial interest in economics and accounting never waned and throughout my years in ministry, I have served as treasurer of campus ministry consortiums, civil rights organizations, community-based coalitions founded to address violence, and for twelve years, for New Castle Presbytery.

Both of my children are now married, and I became a grandfather in January of 2020!