

**March 31, 2019**

**Dear First Congregational Church, Grand Ledge,**

“I don’t like lasts.” I don’t like the last piece of chocolate in the box. I don’t like the last chapter of a book I like, because it’s over. I don’t like those last minutes before I put one of my kids on a plane to somewhere far away. I don’t like the milk container when there is not quite enough milk to go on my cereal. And I don’t like good-byes.

Our last sermon was about being prodigals. Love relentlessly!

But these words are for you, the staff and congregation.

Seven months have given us many Sundays to worship God through music, prayer, and spoken word. It has been a pleasure and a delight to be in this church and pulpit beginning September fourth. Thank you for sharing your lives with me and allowing me to share my life and my family with you. Your interest and kindness let us know immediately that we were welcomed by you as part of this church family.

As gifted people, you use your gifts decisively and precisely to make this church and the world more tolerant and hopeful. You give generously to causes that better the lives of others. Blessings in a Backpack, monthly food donations, necessities for families in need, mission trip supplies, Christmas gifts shared with a family, the use of the church to host those who needed a place to sleep and eat on their way to march at the capitol building. When Holy Spirit gifts are being used to capacity, God’s work is being done. This church is so Holy Spirit gifted!

You are also tolerant with a pastor who did not know exactly what to do with the offering plates at first. You were patient when I chose unsingable hymns because I liked the words but couldn’t read a note of music. Some of those hymns were real stinkers. You endured some sermons that dove off the political end of things. I apologize for causing duress or discomfort.

The things I won’t forget:

The fun first interview with Karen, Rich, and Julie on a hot August afternoon.

Jeannette Len. A saint if there ever was one. Has a church office ever been run so efficiently and kindly? No. I say no. Jeannette is a wonder.

Sue Sackett, who keeps everything clean around here and always has a smile on her face.

Judy Nielsen on the organ and piano. Music from heaven.

Darlene Banks and the bell choir. Angels are jealous.

Brandon Frost and the vocal choir. Again, music that moved us all.

Nicole Maier and her work with our littlest members.

Kathy Burt and the beautiful fresh flowers that made my office so lovely week after week.

Lynn Hart and the children of our congregation.

Charlynn Walker who would hear me mention a song in a sermon and miraculously have it playing as we were all leaving the sanctuary.

My fun WGod lady-pals.

The beauty of the Christmas decorations in this sanctuary.

Many of you came into the office to share stories of your lives with me and it is my privilege to know who you are, how you have lived, how your hearts have been broken and mended, and what motivates you to care and make a difference in the lives of others.

Your hugs have sustained me.

I am thrilled for you and your new pastor, The Reverend Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage. She has been led by God to this place and she will be blessed even as she will be a blessing. God is good! My prayers will be for all of you as you continue down the path forged by Jesus Christ.

But I don't want all these things to be the last. I hope in time Doug and I can sit in the pew here and occasionally worship with you. I hope in time, when Pastor Laura needs a vacation, I can come back as pulpit supply. I hope I see you out and about in the world.

So, I won't say good-bye today. I will say thank you again for your love and kindness.

Peace and joy,

Pastor Barb