



# First Presbyterian Church

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THE REV. DR. SANDRA R. TICE, PASTOR

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To Whom It May Concern:

**Abigail Grace (Abby) Willis** is a young woman with magnificent gifts and promise, and I recommend her to you with admiration and joy. You will note from other records that she has achieved extraordinary academic success in a demanding program and is accomplished as a competitive gymnast. What I want to describe are **her personal characteristics** that might be hard to see on a transcript or infer from a score.

It is easy to see that she is smart and strong. What sets her apart are strengths: her **sensitivity**, her **creativity**, and what I can only call her **light**.

**Abby's sensitivity makes her wise.** Though she is incredibly accomplished, she doesn't fall into the trap of measuring others by their accomplishments. Abby has eyes to see more than scores or grades. This is evident in her leadership of the Best Buddies program for peers with particular challenges. She is sensitive to these students in a way that enables her to learn from them about courage, inclusion, and beauty. This same sensitivity makes her remarkably **alert to meaning in conversations** (hearing things that may remain unsaid) and provides her remarkable **insight into the written word**. This insight and attentiveness may be her greatest strength. She will rarely be the loudest person in the room but **is often the wisest**.

Abby's schedule as a competitive gymnast, IB scholar, and community leader has been grueling. In spite of this, she maintains **creativity and joy**. She can create visual artwork with patience and delight, and can create things like videos to celebrate and document important experiences. She can create an idea for a meeting or group project that is fresh, apt, and energizing. It is rare, I think, for a student to keep this pace and produce at this level- while still having **the ability to imagine, create, and inspire**. Abby is unique.

Finally, Abby carries herself with a **warm and steady light**. I do not mean this in a vague or fuzzy way. Her perseverance, good humor, and ability to be at home in her own skin make her a remarkably strong and resilient friend, a natural leader others rely on. She has privilege and is accomplished, which (in some students) can lead to entitlement or blindness. **Abby is remarkable in that she has a kind of grace beyond her years that lifts others up.** She is a strong and fierce competitor in the gym and strives for academic excellence in the classroom- but she does not need to put others down. She knows her accomplishments are not the sum total of who she is. She has the determination to do her best consistently, while maintaining an even-tempered and welcoming stance which I find astonishing. If she comes to your campus, she will bring not just strength and intelligence, but **the sort of light that forms community and makes a school strong**. I commend her to you without reservation. She is extraordinary.

Most Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Sandra R. Tice, Pastor & Head of Staff