

July 23, 2026

Dear First Evangelical Covenant Church,

Kids First has provided the ministry of childcare and early childhood education to families for nearly thirty years. We have been blessed to care for hundreds if not thousands of kids, giving them a loving, Christ-centered environment to grow into the people God made them to be. We are proud of our legacy, and grateful for the trust of so many in our community. **This is why it pains us to inform you that we are concluding our ministry effective September 25, 2026.**

Several factors contribute to this decision. The childcare industry faces rising expenses as well as declining enrollment for the most profitable age groups. For Kids First, it means that we ended two out of our past five fiscal years having lost money overall, and the profit during the good years was just enough to bring us into the next. Our most challenging financial years happened during director searches. Compounding, we have several leadership changes including the current or pending departures of board members and the pending departures of our Director and our Assistant Director.

This places us in a critical moment. One option is to recruit a new director and assistant director and rebuild our board. Director searches are destabilizing, expensive, and do not always lead to a successful hire. Moving in this direction might allow us to continue our childcare ministry, but the consequence of failure would leave families without childcare with little notice. The second option is to use our available resources to conclude our ministry as gracefully as possible. The Kids First Board, with support from the Leadership Team of First Evangelical Covenant Church, chooses the second option.

Our current Director and Assistant Director will continue to manage Kids First's daily operation until they leave. The exact date of their departures has not been determined as of the writing of this letter. Tiffany Wadell, a trusted and capable staff member of nearly 20 years and beloved member of our congregation, will follow them as our interim director until Kids First closes.

Many of you have personal connections to Kids First. Some of you worked at Kids First at some point in your lives. Others have volunteered, perhaps as board members or maybe readers. Others sent their children, are currently sending their children, or maybe you are Kids First kid yourself. Kids First touched many lives over the years, some of whom were transformed through the power of the Gospel. This is something to celebrate as we conclude our ministry. Please join us for a moment of celebration as part of the worship service on Sunday, September 20, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

Please send your comments or questions to kidsfirstboard@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Michael Bingeman - Kids First Board President
Julie Timme - Kids First Board Treasurer
Elizabeth Nelson - Kids First Board Member
Shana Perry - Kids First Board Member
Silvia Castillo - Kids First Director