South Church in Andover, UCC ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

June 1, 2023 - May 31, 2024



Easter Worship 2024

Special Congregational Meeting June 12, 2024

> 41 Central Street Andover, Massachusetts 01810 www.southchurch.com

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Report of the Moderator

As I reflect on the program year that concludes today, I am so grateful for the many hands that carry out the light work of this church and am humbled to be a part of something good that brings hope, joy, peace and love to so many. The future is filled with excitement and the trepidations that come along for the ride.

We began our first capital campaign in ~20 years, identifying a consultant (Ruotolo and Associates) to help us plan and engage our congregation, engaging an architect and several specialists to ensure the long-term and sustainable viability of our church building, including a re-consideration of our sanctuary.

We welcomed a new Engagement coordinator, Brian Gruhn, who is helping us connect with one another internally and invite into the vibrancy of our church community.

We undertook an initiative to increase the utilization of our historical structure, creating marketing materials and advertising more broadly in the community to invite people in.

We hosted our first ever Holiday Market in December to a sensational turnout, providing a welcoming for members of all ages and the wider community to experience our brand of extravagant welcome.

And we'll vote today on whether to make our first adjustment to our newly endorsed by-laws. Hopefully, the first of many, as we actively live into and refine our by-laws.

In closing, thank you to the so many who had the courage to serve in an uncertain time, in uncertain roles, with uncertain outcomes lying ahead. It takes bravery to fulfill our vision "to boldly embody God's love and compassion". I have taken courage myself from Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them." as a reminder that we are better together.

David Strong

Report of the Senior Pastor

Ten years ago, I offered my Candidating Sermon on March 23rd, 2014 with the hopes of being called as your 18th Senior Pastor. In that sermon based on Genesis, I preached about how creation isn't an event but a process:

"Even though you are a beautiful masterpiece, I believe that South Church is not a finished work. You are evolving, living, and growing. Because creation is not something that happened way back then – it's happening now. The very definition of Genesis means becoming. Everything is in the process of becoming – you and I, and the world around us."

What a joy it has been to see God's layered, multi-colored brushstrokes at our church! I've been deeply grateful for our shared ministry over these 10 years, as we've grown and evolved together.

This program year has been one of stability and growth with a dedicated and excellent staff. Here's what that's looked like:

21% increase in in-pew attendance in 2024

37 new members in the first 5 months of 2024

Average of 167 views (approx 267 people) engage with virtual worship each week

43% increase in our music program over last year (thanks be to God for the incredible leadership of Cathy Meyer)

Donated more than 250,000 since we began our Monthly Mission Partner program in 2019

Increase in pledge income of \$70K with 17 new pledging families

Countless individuals who are inspired, comforted, and challenged by the worship, programs, and service opportunities of South Church

In order to prepare for our first major capital campaign in more than 20 years, church council voted to engage with a consultant company, Ruotolo & Associates who led us through a pre-campaign study. The results highlighted the many strengths of our church and the congregation's support of a multi-faceted capital campaign.

In the winter, a very qualified and experienced Capital Campaign team was convened and the theme of "Rooted in Faith Growing in Hope" was selected. The Rev. Dr. Mary Luti led an evening conversation on "Sacred Space" in Fellowship Hall as our Building Team works with Spencer Preservation Group to imagine redesigning the front of our sanctuary space. This spring, I have had 55+ meetings with individuals (or couples) to solicit support and feedback for the campaign. In the fall, we will move into the public phase as we share details about all the building projects and invite the congregation to make a 3 year pledge in support of the campaign.

God is not done with South Church yet. There's still more brushstrokes of hope, justice, and joy in our future. May the Capital Campaign and thriving ministries of South Church continue to expand the horizon of possibility well into our 4th Century.

Rev. Dana Allen Walsh

Report of the Associate Pastor

What a wonderful year of ministry we've had together! It has been a joy to settle into the rhythms of this community, to participate in beloved traditions, and to be part of fostering what is next in our life together. Here are some of my highlights from this year:

Starting two new Bible Studies with the help of some excellent volunteer leadership (let me know if you'd like to join a Bible Study—I'd love to start a few more!)

Getting to know some of our virtual worshippers through South Church Online, a group dedicated to fostering belonging for those who worship with us from elsewhere

Starting TransParent, a support group for parents who have trans and nonbinary kids, and witnessing to the love and wisdom in that room. I've also had the joy of working with Rolling Ridge to develop a weekend retreat for this July called Trans Families Together.

Starting SC Out, a group for members of the LGBTQ community to gather for fun, fellowship, and mutual support.

Working with Carol-Georgine on updating the collection in the SC library.

Creating prayer stations for the season of Lent.

Developing an updated newcomer process, with the help of our Newcomer Team, including a new class called SC Toolkit.

Creating the Bridges program with Taylor, which gives our future confirmands a chance to get to know one another, and helps kids bridge the gap from 8th to 9th grade by establishing and strengthening relationships with kids in both grades.

As my second year as your Associate Pastor winds to a close, I am so grateful for this wonderful church. We are in a season of growth, a time to plant seeds and look forward to a bright and beautiful future. What a joy and an honor to walk with you in this season!

Yours in hope, faith, and love, Rev. Genna Hosterman

Report of the Minister of Visitation

These past 14 years with you have confirmed the call I felt when accepting this part time position in March 2010.

My official job description is to assist and represent the senior pastor, associate pastor, and South Church in assisting with the coordination of pastoral care and visiting needs. This involves visits to hospitals, nursing homes and members' homes, and working in collaboration with the Deacons' Care and Calling committee.

Some highlights of the past year have included:

Facilitating the Prayer Partners Ministry, (our own South Church Intercessory Prayer team)

Coordinating the monthly worship and communion service at Edgewood

Participating in the South Church Choir and singing for Edgewood services

Assisting the pastors at the monthly communion service for The Woodlands

Praying and visiting with members of the church in the hospital, nursing homes or in their own

private residences

It has been my privilege to serve with you in the ministry of South Church this past year. A special word of thanks goes to Dana Allen Walsh, and Genna Hosterman for their support, encouragement, and leadership. It has truly been a joy to be a part of the outstanding and caring staff and to have my life touched in such tender ways by the congregation of this beloved church.

Your sister in Christ, Sherry Tupper

Report of the Minister of Music

Sing to the Lord with thanks; sing praises to our God with a lyre! God covers the skies with clouds; God makes rain for the earth; God makes the mountains sprout green grass. Psalm 147:7-8

It has been a year of nourishment and growth in the Music Ministry at South Church! God is good! God provides! Psalm 147 has been the foundation of our ministry this year as we think about singing our praise and thanksgiving in many forms, leading to having great gratitude for all that God is doing here, with and for us.

The Music Ministry has seen a great deal of growth in the past year. The Bee Suite, our youth choir program composed of the HoneyComb, Nectar, Hive and Sting choirs, saw a 53% increase in enrollment, from 36 participants in the spring of 2023 to 55 in the spring of 2024. The Sanctuary Choir has also welcomed 11 new members in this same time period; Crossroads has expanded, too. South Strings has become a more robust and active ensemble, and has extended into a youth group called South Strings TOO!, masterfully directed by Julie Diehl. Cheryl Kraley and I also hosted a workshop for young ringers, planting seeds for a future South Church Ringers TOO!

Our outreach into the community has taken many forms, from welcoming people into our sanctuary for another successful Halloween Organ & Light Show and Listen Before Lunch concert series during Lent, to traveling to different places such as Temple Emanuel, the Massachusetts Spring Ring in Tewksbury, The Woodlands Assisted Living and Memory Support, and many trips to the Edgewood Retirement Community. Our biggest event this year was going to the Methuen Memorial Music Hall in December as their featured Christmas Open House entertainment. For the second time, we hosted the second annual Andover Bell Festival and concert. The Bee Suite presented the cantata 100% Chance of Rain, complete with additions written by the Nectar Choir (as the original production did not have enough roles for all of our youth). The spring cantata has become a highlight of the year for all our young musicians, and they are already excited about next year's!

In the ongoing work of caring for our Bozeman pipe organ, we brought organ builder and consultant Scot Huntington to South Church to do a full assessment in November. After receiving his 22-page report, we formed a small task force to meet with him and hear his suggestions on how we can get the most out of this particular instrument. We also have been meeting with organ consultant and builder Jonathan Ortloff to determine what type of organ we should think about putting in the front of the church to support our musical ensembles after the sanctuary remodel. It has been an eye-opening process: certainly something to follow as the Capital Campaign plans and our future unfolds. Stay tuned on how you can be involved in these incredible projects!

The hymnist Jonathan Malicsi writes "Let all our bodies sway to God's music, let all the earth move with our feet and hands; for it is God who inspires and uplifts us, from whom flows all rhythm in our dance. O Lord, we sing with joyful hearts, with soul and body offer we our arts." We give thanks to God for all that is in the works, and we hope you will join us in the dance!

Report of the Minister of Youth & Families

Brene Brown defines joy as "an intense feeling of deep spiritual connection, pleasure and appreciation." Researcher Matthew Kuan Johnson talks about when we experience joy, "we don't lose ourselves, we become more truly ourselves."

Over the past year, I have experienced joy and I have witnessed a great deal of joy. I've seen joy amongst the youth and the adults that serve them. I've seen joy bubble up in 37 youth at Vacation Bible School as they went deeper into their faith throughout the week. (I think there was real joy in watching me get a bucket of slime dumped on me as well as getting to pie me in the face.) I saw sparks of joy as new connections were formed between 102 kids at Summer of Service. Joy was evident as they served 19 different organizations. As the school year kicked off, joy was fostered through weekly youth group gatherings and Sunday School. Kids began learning creatively and joyfully in Sunday School thanks to our dedicated Sunday school teachers. Joy was all over the place at youth group meetings where dug into Scripture and played silly games. I loved watching kids become more of their true selves throughout the year as they became more and more comfortable with each other. Over the course of the year, this dedication to authenticity was cemented in through our senior class meetings, middle school overnights, and our annual high school mission trip. The majority of our 22 students on the mission trip expressed the joy of the mission trip is not only completing satisfying work for the community but also the opportunity to be their truest selves without fear of judgment. For me, hearing that is pure joy. The joy of the year did not stop at those experiences, there was tangible joy at advent wreath making and most of all at the Easter egg hunt and petting zoo as 80 kids ran throughout the sanctuary searching far and wide for specific eggs.

Joy is the foundation of our youth and family ministry here at South Church. If you ever listen to a children's message, volunteer at Sunday School, youth groups, or at a big event, you have witnessed it first hand. For me the greatest joy comes from the students experiencing joy that fosters authenticity. Joy produces gratitude. I am extremely grateful for the numerous volunteers who make the youth ministry run here at South Church. I am grateful not to do this work alone. It brings me joy to witness other people's joy as they get to know the kids and when the kids embrace the opportunity of authenticity.

Joyfully, Taylor Graffum

Report of the Faith Formation Ministry

The Faith Formation Adult programs have been well-attended and provided lots of stimulating discussions on a variety of topics. Our Bible Study program has 2 groups: the Friday night and the Sunday evening times. The Sunday group is new and has been focusing on the Book of Luke, using many different translations that bring nuance to the texts. The Friday group has concentrated on various Biblical books. We also spent time exploring our own "statement of faith" and sharing that with the group.

Theology on Tap has been moved to Culpepper's in North Andover and is providing a better atmosphere for listening and sharing on a number of faith topics.

Faith Forum has continued its commitment to educating ourselves regarding Climate issues and how we, as God's stewards, can effect positive change in saving our planet. We have also studied the works of prominent writers who offer thoughtful words on racism, church, aging and forming deeper relationships.

To learn more about the Faith Formation ministries offered for our Youth in the past year, please see Taylor's Annual Report.

Chris Ouimet and Jen Beers, Co-Chairs

Report of the Spiritual Life Ministry

The Spiritual Life Ministry's function is to show that it encompasses both the many ways that we worship God and share God's love in our community.

The Worship Deacons spent a lot of time this year focusing on updating procedures to reflect the current values of our members. They continue with the familiar roles of reading the Sunday morning Scripture and offertory prayer and serving Communion. They are also providing support at funerals and baptisms. This group is continuing to further define its role with the pastoral staff to make it a meaningful and supportive role within the church.

The Care and Calling Deacons have done a fabulous job of the important role of keeping touch with many members of our congregation who are either unable or not yet ready to return to the sanctuary. Their outreach has included many cards, letters, holiday plants delivery, transportation to doctors' appointments and meals when requested. They are looking forward to a fall training session to learn how to bring communion to members who need extra care.

Our AV and Sound teams have been combined into Worship AudioVisual group. They are also part of the newly formed Information Technology team which is being chartered as part of the Facilities team. This dedicated group continues to provide an outstanding worship experience for both our in-person and remote congregants.

The role of Digital Deacon has enabled prayers from our virtual worshippers to be brought to the in-person congregation and provided support to those attending worship online. This role has been filled by Deacons (from both groups) and other dedicated volunteers. Ushers and Greeters continue to perform their important roles of being a welcoming and helpful group for returning and new church attendees.

Scheduling Acolytes was a challenge this year, but hopefully this role will be resuming in the fall. The Music Committee is also part of the Spiritual Life team; see the report of the Music Minister for all the details. The Flower Committee continues to brighten the sanctuary with flowers weekly and special displays during the holidays. Flowers are still delivered many weeks to different members of the congregation, although recruiting flower deliverers continues to be a challenge. Thanks to all who contribute to the scheduling and coordination of the variety of our functions; this continues to make planning easier for all, including staff. We are all excited to see our in-person worship numbers continue to increase!

Donna Stewart and Ben Li, Co-Chairs

Report of the Delegates to the Northeast Association

Willa Rapp, Lindsey Pacios, and Janet Clarke attended the NEAssociation Annual Meeting on May 3rd, at Second Congregational Church in Beverly.

Greetings and peace be with you, Church. My name is Lindsey Pacios. I am a member of South Church as well as a delegate on behalf of South Church. Last month, I attended the Northeast Association meeting with Willa and Janet, and I will attend the SNECUCC annual meeting in the coming weeks.

The "big" resolution delegates will be voting on at this upcoming meeting is about becoming a WISE conference. We were able to get a taste of what WISE is and why churches should adopt the WISE covenant. WISE stands for Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged. Being a WISE congregation means that a church fully affirms and welcomes people who struggle with mental illness into the full life of the church. Through education and compassionate listening, WISE seeks to end the stigma of mental illness in the church setting and our communities.

I am voting in favor of the conference becoming a WISE conference because I struggle with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). My diagnosis is highly stigmatized and misunderstood, not just by average people but also by healthcare professionals. About 1% of the population has BPD, and about 70% of people with BPD will make at least one suicide attempt in their lifetime. Tragically, 10% will die by suicide. BPD is considered to be "the most painful mental illness." Marsha Linehan, a psychologist who has BPD herself and who developed Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), a treatment for BPD, said, "People with borderline personality disorder (and those like them) are like people with third-degree burns over 90% of their bodies."

Although I am voting "yes" to affirm the WISE covenant in the conference setting, it is up to us as an individual church to do the work to adopt the WISE covenant in our singular churches like South Church. For too long, the church has told people with mental illness that they are "too much" or "not enough," unfaithful, or to "just pray it away." Our conference is in a position to change these unhelpful Christian narratives that have bled into our churches by choosing to adopt the WISE covenant to be Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged.

Lindsey Pacios, Delegate

Report of the Delegates to the SNEUCC

Janet Clarke, Lindsey Pacios and Susan Henke had the honor of attending the fourth annual meeting of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ (SNEUCC) annual meeting on June 17, 2023, at the DCU Center in Hartford, Connecticut as delegates from South Church.

- At the meeting, we visited a powerful quilt exhibition created by The Sacred Ally Quilt Ministry memorializing the words of George Floyd. The Sacred Ally Quilt Ministry was formed by nine New Hampshire UCC congregations.
- Executive Conference Minister, The Rev. Darrell Goodwin, delivered the sermon at opening worship with a strong call to not just roll away the stone of injustice, but to dismantle it. The numerous anti-LGBTQ bills across the country have raised much concern as well as Super Bowl advertising by groups claiming Christian values. Rev. Goodwin announced a new effort to spread the news of churches in

SNEUCC by introducing a new website, "Find Hope Now" at https://www.findhopenow.org/

From the new website:

- "Finding Authentic Hope in a World That Can Feel Hopeless. There is a place for you in this world. A place of radical inclusion. A place where, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome. A place of hope.
- Who Are We? We are nearly 600 United Church of Christ congregations in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, each one offering a unique type of hope in their communities. Find a place of hope near you."
- General Minister nominee, subsequently elected UCC General Minister at General Synod, the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson gave the Keynote Address calling for letting go of certainty. Rev. Dr. Thompson detailed three elements that would enable our young Conference and the whole church to move into the future:
 - o Innovation and risk
 - o Creativity and new life
 - o Collaboration and togetherness
- We celebrated the Massachusetts Bible Society, formed 215 years ago, becoming part of the SNEUCC.
- The Board recommended change to the bylaws allowing non-Board members to chair Board committees was approved.
- We accepted the transfer of more than \$26 million in endowments and invested funds from the historic Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island Conferences.
- Breakout sessions included: Disability Justice; Environmental Justice; Immigration, Refugee and Asylum Justice; LGBTQIA+ Justice; and Racial Justice.
- More information on the meeting including videos and reports can be found on the conference website: https://www.sneucc.org/
 and 2023 meeting event website: https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/16428435

We look forward to attending this year's annual meeting which will be held on June 21-22, 2024.

Janet Clarke, Lindsey Pacios, and Susan Henke, SNEUCC delegates

Report of the Nominating Team

(Human Resources Ministry)

This year's proposed nominating slate can be viewed on the following page. This includes moderator, treasurer, clerk, 12 ministry leads and upwards of 81 chartered team members and delegates to local and regional UCC meetings. A few open spots remain, but Nominating remains committed to working with interested individuals to fill those.

We are so grateful to have engaged with so many during the nominating season this year. We truly appreciate everyone's thoughtful and prayerful consideration, whether they accepted a nominated position or not. Not to be forgotten are the many folks who faithfully serve South Church as part of self-guided teams and ad-hoc teams who are not listed on the nominated slate. Those teams perform some of the most important work of the church and we appreciate you!

South Church provides so many opportunities for those with so many interests and talents. If you are interested in participating in any of the listed roles, we encourage you to reach out to the Nominating team to explore these opportunities.

		Nominating Team Report June 2024			
Moderator: Dennis Forgue	Treasurer: Janna Roop	Clerk: Wayne Shaw	=		
Spiritual Life Ministry	Ben Li (2025)	Donna Stewart (2025)	Finance	Scott Corning (2025)	Liss Sellers (2025)
Care and Calling	Meredith Moody (2025)	Robin Murray (2025)	Annual Giving	OPEN - Lead	Scott Corning (2026)
	Eileen Forgue (2025)	Judy Olmstead (2025)		Bob Tigelaar (2025)	
	Peg Little (2025)	Beth Groff (2026)	Giving Coordination	OPEN	
Worship Deacons	Marge Chiafery (2025)-Head Martin McGrath (2025) Rachel Combs (2025) Dave Floreen (2025) David Pace (2025) Janice Hill (2025) Betsy Hopkins (2025) Steve Longo (2025) Serena Manning (2025) Linda Mesler (2025)	Kath Mason (2025)-Head Linda Zimmerman (2025) Janet Clarke (2025) Bob Tigelaar (2025) Ben Li (2026) Amie Hellauer (2026) Gavin Kelley (2026)	Memorial Gifts	Char Lyons (Lead 2025) Jennifer Bouchard (2025) Eric Stubenhaus (2025)	
Audio-visual team	Justin Bacchi (2025) Co-Lead	Tom Appleton (2025) Co-Lead	Investment	Ted Jenkins (2025)	
	Lucas Bacchi (2025)	Bill Stewart (2025)		Lenore Price (2027)	
	Doug Bacchi (2025)			Ron Hill (2029)	†
New Members	OPEN - coordinator role	Kelly Ferguson (2025)	Sunday Offering Coordinator	Martin McGrath (2025)	
	Scar Holbrook (2025)	Judy Olmstead (2025)	Human Resources	Dave Jagger (2026)	OPEN
	Polly Pyle (2025)		HR Team	Tim Smith (2025)	
Music	Vic Olmsted (2025)	Lauren Sprague (2026)	Nominating	Dave Jagger (2025)	OPEN
Faith Formation	Chris Ouimet (2025)	Kathleen Curry (2026)		Susan Henke (2025)	OPEN
Youth & Family Faith Formation Team (YFFFT)	Valerie MacKenzie (2025)	Heather Shows (2025) Chair	Delegates - Northeast Association	Willa Rapp (2025)	
	Stephanie Michael (2025)	Heather Saniuk (2025)		Janet Clarke (2025)	
	David DiGiammarino (2025)	Jennifer Hoenig (2025)		Lindsey Pacios (2025)	
	Allison Osgood (2025)	Liz Monroe (2026)	Delegates - Southern New England Conference	Susan Henke (2025)	
	ary and the second	Alvyn Reyes (2026)	1087	Janet Clarke (2025)	
Community Service	Amy Joyall (2025)	Lori Wyckoff (2026)		Lindsey Pacios (2025)	
Missions	Alyson Shaw (2025) Co-Lead	Laura Rex (2025) Co-Lead	Congregational Life	Jan Holden (2025)	OPEN
	Brenda Cronin (2025)	Rachel Daniels (2025)	Fellowship	Alex Schuck (2025)	Heather Sievers (2026)
	Andrea Stidsen (2025)	Cheryl Kraley (2025)	(John Sievers (2026)
	Laura Jordan (2025)	Cindy Ozirsky (2025)	8		Barbara Martin (2026)
	Ann Marie Cortner (2025)	Kristie Nardini (2026)			OPEN
		Marie Machacek (2026)			
Facilities	Brenda Bryan (2025)	John Wiggins (2025)			
	Page Bouchard (2025)	Emily Strong (2025)			
	Char Lyons (2025) Cemetery	3 W.J. 18W UN			
Information Technology	Paul Groff (2026) Co-Lead	Lucas Bacchi (2026) Co-Lead			
	Tim Ozirsky (2025)	Steve Cortner (2025)			
	Bill Stewart (2025)	Ŷ	8		-