

>>> SOUTH CHURCH ANDOVER NEWSLETTER <<<

THE CIRCLE



boldly embodying God's love and compassion



Andover Farmers Market

We worship a God who is an Innovator. Not afraid to be boldly colorful and creative. In Scripture we see God tell the people through the prophet Isaiah: "See I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

Innovation is the life blood of the church. We could give Silicon Valley a run for its money. Read more of Pastor's Dana's letter on page 2.

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South Church in Andover An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

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A NOTE FROM DANA

Good People:

Autumn is the season in which God gives us a clear object lesson. The great beauty of orange, red, and yellow leaves are a sign of the tree's work of letting go and release. Within God's creation, as one leaf falls to the ground, it's not replaced by an exact replica, instead something new grows in its place. Sure, it might be a leaf, but it's unique in its size and shape. The letting go is the necessary precursor to new life.



WE WORSHIP A GOD WHO IS AN INNOVATOR. NOT AFRAID TO BE BOLDLY COLORFUL AND CREATIVE.

In Scripture we see God tell the people through the prophet Isaiah:
"See I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

Innovation is the life blood of the church. We could give Silicon Valley a run for its money.

Scholar Kenda Creasy Dean in her book, "Innovating for Love" cites how the church has produced countless innovations—social welfare, hospitals, universities, architecture, art, and democracy.

Medieval monastic agricultural innovations like the heavy plow, the nailed horseshoe, the three-field crop rotation caused an agricultural revolution in Europe that fended off cycles of starvation. Plentiful food fueled a population boom, which led to economic, cultural, artistic, and technological innovations, including the modern university which brought higher wages and more time for leisure and moral reflection. Many scholars believe that this helped end slavery in Western Europe between the 9th and 13th Centuries. In the 16th Century, the Protestant Reformation took the innovative spirit of monasteries and applied it to civic life, as a way to address social problems.

It was innovation for the sake of love,

for the sake of justice and joy,

for the sake of hope.

It's not innovation so we can be the next Mark Zuckerberg or Elon Musk. It's not about building wealth, drawing attention, or boosting egos. It's not even about saving dying churches or getting more people back into the pews.

We are called to the work of innovation and imagination because God is already there.

God is doing the new thing.

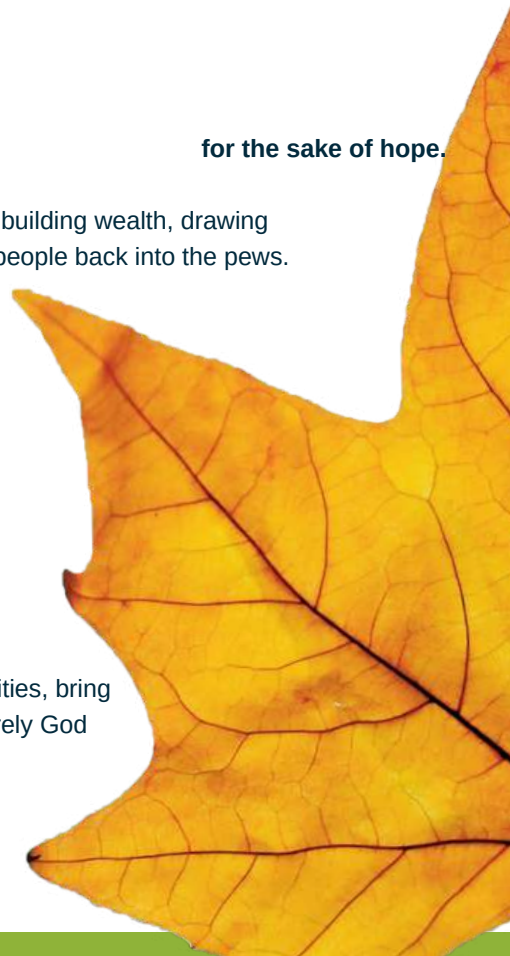
Good People, I believe that if we are called to live in a way that relieves suffering, adds meaning, and magnifies joy, then innovation is essential.

Innovation is defined most simply as "change that adds value."
South Church, at its best, adds value to this world.

If God can jolt dry bones awake, make depleted soil bloom, restore shattered communities, bring hope to dispirited disciples, and offer bright, colorful possibilities for the future, then surely God can use our imagination to do some good in this world.

May it be so,

Pastor Dana



CARING FOR COMMUNITY IN UGANDA

YOU CAN'T CARE FOR SOMETHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

By Taylor Graffum, Minister of Youth & Families

In early August, I had the opportunity to travel to Uganda for about two weeks through a graduate course at Boston University with two professors and some classmates. We were meeting different people and their organizations to learn about the ways that they care for their communities—from a teen pregnancy boarding center to secondary schools to sustainable farming and forestry organizations.

We visited and stayed at a place called Bethany Land Institute (BLI). They focus on caring for the earth as a way to care for their neighbors who face poverty. At BLI, we toured the farm and forest and watched the birds who inhabit the land.

»»» BEFORE OUR BIRDING ADVENTURE,

Calvin, one of the BLI tour leaders, said something that has remained with me: “you can’t care for something you don’t understand.”

Even though this statement was about birds, it applies to so much of life. In order to truly care properly for something or someone, you must learn to understand it. Learning and taking the time to understand something or someone is a form of care in and of itself. I think about my ministry here at the church. In order to care for kids and teens, I must understand them, their friendships, their hobbies, their family, their passions and sometimes even memorize their Starbucks order. Who or what in your life are you caring for? How might you seek to understand them a little more in order to further care about them? Maybe it’s a family member or a stranger, who or what is God inviting you to seek to understand for the sake of caring for them?

Oh and we also saw some pretty cool wildlife and the most powerful waterfall in the world!



MEET DENNIS FORGUE

SOUTH CHURCH'S NEW MODERATOR

By Dennis Forgue

For those of you that don't know me, I'm Dennis Forgue, the new Moderator taking over for David Strong who effectively and graciously served South Church through some challenging transitions for the past three years. My wife Eileen, and our family, first attended a service at South Church over seven years ago. Following a long affiliation with St. Michael's in North Andover, our family was seeking a new religious experience in an open and affirming congregation. Our first visit was while the mission trip was in South Carolina and the youth joined the service via phone. Their enthusiasm was amazing. Combined with the extravagant welcome delivered by Dana, our interest in South Church was peaked. During our second visit, mission trip youth were leading services after their return home. Hearing their stories and the impact upon their lives was inspiring. Having a seventh grader and high school freshman at the time (in attendance), we were sold and became members that fall.



During the past seven years I've served on the Youth Committee as well as search committees for both Cathy Meyer as Music Minister and Genna Hosterman as Associated Pastor. You might recognize me more from helping Eileen for many months with Fellowship gatherings following services as South Church emerged from the pandemic. In 2020, Jim McQuade recruited me to join him on the initial Finance Ministry as South Church began its governance transition. It is in this role, for the next two years, that I began to learn about the inner workings of South Church.

Following two years on the Finance Committee, I was happy to take a step back and help Eileen in her various Fellowship and volunteering activities. It was nice to keep a low profile. However, in the spring of this year, I received a request to meet with Pastor Dana to discuss a leadership role.

»» SURE, WHY NOT, I THOUGHT. WITHIN THE FIRST TWO MINUTES OF OUR MEETING,

the request to accept a nomination to become the new Moderator was on the table. Dana can be direct. After much consideration, and encouragement from Eileen and support of the South Church Congregation, here we are.

South Church's emergence from the pandemic has been amazing. The growth in membership, music programming, community outreach, missions, volunteering and the care and support provided to our members is something I have not experienced in my life. My vision as Moderator is to assist the Council in addressing the issues that come before it, frame and facilitate its discussions, thus allowing the Council to make decisions that will support the fellowship, mission and goals of South Church. I also see the role as assisting various Ministry chairs and co-chairs in their leadership of the many teams and programs that make South Church the vibrant community that it is. Finally, the role is a partner to Dana and supporting her efforts in her pastoral leadership of South Church.

Eileen and I will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary next year. We have two children, Nate 24 and Jobe 23, both still living at home and pursuing their educations and careers. We are both retired and after 23 years in Andover, we downsized and relocated to the north side of Haverhill. In Andover we were very involved in volunteering with the schools, sports and Show Choir at AHS. I served for six years on the Andover School Committee, two years as Chair—good training for this Moderator position. Presently, we travel as much as we can, in the last couple of years visiting Ireland, Hawaii and various places in the US. A good amount of our time is spent on various volunteering activities with South Church.

In closing, I am grateful and humbled to have this opportunity to take on the Moderator role for South Church. Please feel free to reach out to me with questions, concerns, ideas, opinions or just to introduce yourself. I look forward to seeing you soon.

COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

HOW OUR BUILDING NUTURES CONNECTIONS BEYOND OUR WALLS

By Nora Pelt, Communications Administrator

A slip of paper taped to my computer monitor reads, in part, “we welcome all and actively nurture connections within and beyond our walls.” I keep South Church’s mission statement in plain sight to help guide my work. Part of that work is to facilitate building use by the wider Andover community. Our building offers lots of square footage and a variety of different spaces, and we try to keep it both physically and financially accessible to everyone.

In the last 12 months, I have worked to get the word out, beyond our walls, that our building is open and available for the community to use. I spent time with marketing interns from Merrimack College, listed our spaces on event space websites, received a grant to pay for professional images of our spaces and property, built out a webpage so the community can see what we offer, and developed an online space reservation request form to make the reservation process more efficient.

»»» SINCE JANUARY, WE HAVE WELCOMED 24 DIFFERENT COMMUNITY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS INTO OUR BUILDING

for various events and programming. A small film making group filmed a math class scene in one of our classrooms and recreated a school dance in Fellowship Hall. Performing arts groups are using our spaces for rehearsals, concerts and recitals. Just this summer, 130 different kids spent time at South Church for classes in chess, robotics, South Asian dance, music, and movement. There were cultural celebrations and dinner events. We are a Neighbors in Need food pantry site and host gatherings for PFLAG and Alcoholics Anonymous. The Andover Garden Club, the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association, and even condo associations are gathering in our spaces. The scouts meet here multiple times a month throughout the program year. The chapel provides a beautiful setting for yoga classes on Monday and Wednesday mornings and we just welcomed Andover Elder Services to the building with classes on Monday mornings.

This summer, an era ended as Andover Rompers Nursery School closed their doors. After a sad “goodbye” to Rompers and their staff, a new chapter is beginning as Merrimack Valley YMCA prepares to open their new daycare site at South Church this fall.

Are you as amazed as I am with all that the community is doing at South Church? Our building is busy! In fact, aside from Sundays, there have only been FIVE days in 2024 without someone from the wider community using our building.

Being in a church isn’t an easy thing for everyone. It may sound backward, but each time a member of the wider community enters our building, I see it as an opportunity to nurture connections beyond our walls. It is an opportunity to exercise our extravagant welcome. We can warmly greet people into our clean, comfortable spaces and let them know how glad we are to share our space with them.



GET TO KNOW SHANNON ELDRIDGE!

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH CHOIRS

Shannon Eldridge (she/her/hers) joins Michaela Barczak as a Director of Youth Choirs. She is a voice teacher, theater educator, and performer from Haverhill, MA; holds a B.M. in Classical Voice Performance from the University of Southern Maine; and has been teaching private voice lessons and theater classes for over a decade at a variety of community arts organizations including Pike School (Andover), Acting Out Theatre Co. (Lawrence) The Paige Conservatory for Performing Arts (N Andover), Kaleidoscope Kids (Andover), Creative Arts (Reading), and Wellesley Theatre Project (Wellesley). Shannon owns and operates her private voice studio in Lawrence, MA where she specializes in Musical Theater and other contemporary commercial music styles and is an active member of National Association of Teachers of Singing–Boston Chapter. She is also a recently certified Music Together teacher! As a performer, Shannon has sung with Opera Maine (formerly PORTOpera), Opera Providence, The College Light Opera Company, and locally with Pentucket Players, Inc. and Acting Out Theater Co.

“My love for singing first began in my church youth choir when I was around 6 or 7 and blossomed into a passion that has lasted a lifetime! To be a part of the South Church Music Ministry is truly a full circle moment for me – to be able to share in the joy of music-making and to enthusiastically lead these amazing kids in the same ways that inspired me as a child.”

What is the most daring thing you have done?

I went on a weekend road trip to NYC with John after only knowing him for a few months. No worries - it went well!

What aspect of your job brings you the most satisfaction or fulfillment?

Getting to glimpse those realization moments of accomplishment, pride, and self-discovery in my students. Those “Wow, I CAN do this!” or “I LOVE this!” or “Oh, THIS is what it feels like!” moments. It feels really good to be a catalyst that sparks someone’s passion, or gives them a boost in confidence. I still remember the first choir director who did that for me, and I am forever grateful.

A favorite quote or Bible verse:

“Music is God’s gift to man, the only art of Heaven given to earth, the only art of earth we take to Heaven.” - Walter Savage Landor

If you could be an animal which one would you be?

A dolphin. They are beautiful, intelligent, emotional creatures. And I love swimming!

What is the best gift you ever received?

I don’t know if it’s best necessarily, but one of my most memorable was the first time I went to New York City. I saw my first Broadway show, got to meet my all time idol, Bernadette Peters and got to stay in Times Square - fifteen year old me was LIVING!

What is one thing that few people know about you?

I grew up on Yellow Brick Road, yes, really - it’s a street!

What song would you say sums you up?

You’re asking a music person to pick ONE song?! Oh man, I need about a year to think on this one!

What words do you try to live by?

“No matter how long you’ve traveled in one direction, you can always choose a new path.”



HERE I AM

WOMEN'S RETREAT REGISTRATION IS OPEN | JANUARY 31 TO FEBRUARY 2, 2025

By Chris Ouimet

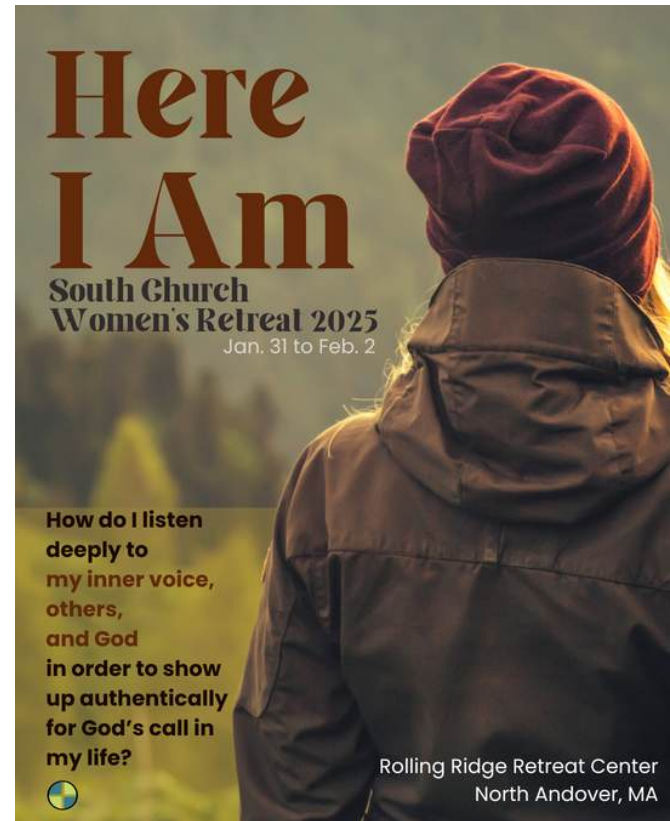
What is so special about a women's retreat? We see one another in church or work together on committees or projects, but a weekend or day together is something else!

Before the pandemic, I attended my first women's retreat in Duxbury. I was relatively new to South Church and didn't know many of the women. During those two days, I came into a circle of care and sisterhood that helped me to feel much more connected to South Church. Two years ago, we were in Hingham at another retreat center. We prayed, sang, danced, laughed, created a lovely art piece and deepened that sense of sisterhood. Last year we were at Rolling Ridge. New women joined us and added so much to the circle. We walked in the woods, meditated, shared in small groups.

»»» ALONE AND TOGETHER, WE PRAYED AND PLAYED.

What is so special about a Women's Retreat? EVERYTHING! Time away, time to grow in our faith, time together as deeply caring women, time in nature, time to be!

I can hardly wait for our next retreat in January! Please come and join the circle! [Scan the code or click here to register today.](#) Space is limited.



YOUTH PROGRAMS & MUSIC ENSEMBLES

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

Each week our **Youth & Families Ministry** offers new opportunities for youth to connect! Whether you plan to join us every week or are only able to drop in once in a while, scan the code or [click here](#) to share your info with us so we can keep you updated on what is happening. There is a place for everyone!



- Nursery (ages 0-4) during Sunday worship
- Sunday School (preK-grade 6) following the Children's Message during Sunday worship.
- Middle School Youth Group (grades 6-8) Sundays 1:00-2:30PM.
- High School Youth Group (grades 9-12) Sundays 3:30-5:00PM.



In addition to our adult ensembles, South Church's **Music Ministry** offers programming for youth ages 0-18. This year's theme is *Life of the Party*, where we will celebrate you, your children, and all the fun we have together making music. Register now before classes fill up! Scan the code or [click here to register](#) for youth music ensembles.



COLLABORATING TO OPEN HEARTS & MINDS

THE SUMMER PACE IS SLOWER, BUT SJC'S WORK CONTINUES

The Social Justice Coalition (SJC) work "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8) continued through the slower pace of summer days.

Summer vacation kicked off and we provided water bottles for foster children at the Dracut Little Heroes group home. These children have been taken under the wing of **South Church Youth** along with the support of the SJC to celebrate holidays and school year events.

In solidarity with **South Church Pride's** June 2nd Pride Parade Day, the SJC sponsored a kid - focused celebratory Rainbow Sidewalk Chalking opportunity at the Andover Common. Also in June, the SJC allied with **Andover Baptist Church, Christ Episcopal Church, Temple Emanuel**, and the **Town of Andover** in culmination of months of steering committee work to celebrate Juneteenth 2024 at the Andover Cormier Youth Center. South Church volunteers started with event set up, staffed the welcome table, had an exhibit table, served the traditional, festive strawberry soda, and closed with event breakdown. During formal ceremonies, SJC's Ellen Townson did a fine job as a last minute stand-in Select Board speaker!

Expanding our goal to collaborate in the community to open hearts and minds, the SJC is collaborating with **Andover DEI Commission** on projects to further diversity, equity, and inclusion in Andover. A first trial event will be "Unity in Community" at Andover Days September 21st.

Beyond our local efforts, advocating for Massachusetts juvenile justice reform bills continued through July. Preparations for an autumn follow-up meeting advocating juvenile diversion with **Essex County District Attorney Paul Tucker** are underway. There will be special focus on diversion for foster children. Diversion is a way of redirecting young people away from the formal juvenile justice system while still holding them accountable for their actions.



The SJC continues its Andover food insecurity initiative by helping to recruit South Church greeters for the Thursday **Neighbors in Need** food pantry at church. Also, the updated fall/winter food resources list is being prepared in three languages and will be distributed to the SJC webpage, the public library, town and school social workers, and food pantries' clients.

Following up on the spring initiative, we are continuing an exciting collaboration with the **South Church Music Committee** and Minister of Music Cathy Meyer to understand, appreciate, and help communicate Cathy's creative organization of worship music including diversity in composers, arrangements, and genres. Watch this fall for enlightening developments to be shared with the whole congregation.

Finally, the SJC is joining with the **Greater Andover Indivisible's** non-partisan "get out the vote" postcarding effort to inform unregistered voters how to become voters. This is in the spirit of the UCC national campaign—Your Faith, Your Voice, Your Vote.

We always welcome new members either through the members' email list or participating in working group meetings and actions. Contact the SJC through Meredith Moody at eredithm3@gmail.com or Jan.Holden13@gmail.com.

THE PRIVILEGE AND HONOR

PREACHING AT UNION CHAPEL MARTHA'S VINEYARD

By Dana Allen Walsh, Senior Pastor

I had the privilege and honor of preaching at Union Chapel Martha's Vineyard. I've been anticipating this weekend for months, feeling intimidated to be amongst some of the best preachers in our country and wanting to do justice to my family history on the Vineyard.

In my sermon, I shared this part of my story:

When my great-grandfather started worshiping at the congregational church in Bristol, CT, he wasn't allowed to sit in the main pews of the church. He worshiped from the back balcony, along with other immigrants and people of color.

As a Chinese immigrant, my great-grandfather supported his family by running a laundromat. His daughter (my grandmother) spent her childhood starching collars for all the gentlemen who were allowed in the main floor of the congregational church.

My grandmother and her brother went on to become engineers. My grandmother, Lillian Lee Wey, was the only Asian female engineer to work for General Electric during the war and my great-uncle, George Wey, was the chief engineer for the construction of the Boston Harbor.

George retired here to Martha's Vineyard, establishing his family homestead by remodeling the old Rice theater playhouse dormitory. In retirement here on the island, he created his own engineering company and served a stint as the Director of Union Chapel. He replaced the roof of this beautiful building with his grandsons when he was far too old to be climbing up tall ladders and he worshiped in these pews, belting out hymns with the worst, most off-key singing.

➤➤➤ TO MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER, ALL OF THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN UNIMAGINABLE.

From his seat in the back balcony, it would have been hard to fathom that his son would design Boston Harbor & his daughter would be an engineer for GE.

It would have been difficult to comprehend only two generations later that one of his kin would move from the balcony to the pulpit.

Yet with God, all is possible. We are our ancestors' wildest dreams - you and me - unimaginable.



IT'S A MYSTERY: VBS 2024

10

➤➤➤ KIDS' SUMMER KICKOFF (FORMERLY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL)

By Fenyx Klock, Caroline Pace, and Noah Stevens 2024 Summer Interns

Kids Summer Kickoff has never been more mysterious! This year's theme, "It's a Mystery!", had kids solving enigmas regarding the definitions of love, faith, prayer, church, and the Bible. Participating youth spent the week learning new musical instruments, exploring scripture, building community, creating and crafting, learning new skills, and solving a daily riddle that led them to find daily gifts - equipment to help them become proper detectives! All of us at church find ourselves still humming those catchy KSK songs...come back next year for more summer fun!



Registration for Kids' Summer Kickoff 2025 opens in January!

1500 HOURS OF SERVICE TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

By Fenyx Klock, Caroline Pace, and Noah Stevens 2024 Summer Interns

This year's Summer of Service was, quite literally, record-breaking! For the first time in the program's history, we had waiting lists for all three weeks! The middle school and high school youth fed the hungry at food pantries; worked at a food donation warehouse; cared for creation at food gardens and on walking trails; and loved their neighbor at a senior center, a boarding house, numerous clothing donation centers, and many other places around our community. In total, the youth put in 1500 hours of community service and consumed about 3000 freeze pops. We hope you will join us next year for more service and fun!



SUPPORTIVE, UPLIFTING, & INSPIRING

REFLECTIONS FROM TWO 2024 SC SUMMER INTERNS

>>> CAROLINE



This has been a milestone year for me, from graduating college in May, to preparing to move into a new apartment in Boston and starting a new job in September. In a way, this internship has allowed me to come full circle - giving me one last chance for involvement in the youth programs at South Church that were so formative for me as a teen. Spending the summer as a part of the supportive, uplifting, and inspiring environment that is South Church (and with the supportive, uplifting, and inspiring people who work here), has gifted me with not only the leadership, communication, and creative skills that I will need to be successful as a working adult, but also with the confidence and encouragement that will bolster my development and self-esteem as a human being in this world. I highly recommend this program for any former South Church youth who wants the opportunity to both learn about ministry and give back to the programs that impacted them as a young adult.

>>> NOAH



This summer I got a lot out of running the youth programs. I now know that I want to focus my research on invasive species, I have new knowledge on leadership skills and what it's like to work in an office, and I was able to participate in one more Summer of Service. Not only was it interesting to see the inner workings of Summer of Service and Kids Summer Kickoff, it was such a rewarding experience to be part of the team making these programs happen. Every "Thank you" from a camper or community partner is worth more than they could know. This was the best possible way I could have spent my summer home from college, and I'm glad I did. I get to leave with good memories from good people. If you're thinking about what to fill your summer home from college with, I highly recommend you apply to be a South Church Summer Intern.



MONTHLY MISSION UPDATE

Local & National Bee Support
\$1,460

Youth Sunday
\$860

**North Shore Alliance
for GLBTQ+ Youth**
\$2,339

Giving Garden
\$1,188

Samaritan Fund
\$804

A WEEKEND OF CONNECTING

THE TRANS FAMILIES TOGETHER RETREAT

By Genevieve Hosterman, Associate Pastor

Last winter, Larry Jay, the Director of Rolling Ridge Conference and Retreat Center, met me for coffee.

He had an idea for a weekend retreat designed to help families with trans and gender nonconforming kids to get to know one another and find support and rest. Together we dreamed about some possibilities and sketched out a possible structure.

In the following months, I had the joy of working alongside many folks, including Rev. Adam Randazzo, the retreat's director. Many of the leaders of the event were themselves trans or nonbinary—if we were going to create an event for the trans community, it was vital for there to be trans representation in the planning team, too.

The first annual Trans Families Together retreat was held this year on the weekend of July 5. I served as a small group leader, alongside the fabulous Revs. Renee Manning and Lori Wyckoff.

We had a blast. Our retreat began on Friday night with an opening ritual (lead by Lori). We spent some time getting to know one another, and ended the night with one of Renee's fantastic astronomy talks.

Saturday was full of important conversations—parents, siblings, and trans kids all went to individual affinity groups, where they had the chance to meet others going through a similar situation. Later in the afternoon, families came together and met with a spiritual director and a psychologist, giving them time to share and discuss anything that came up for them throughout the day.

But there was also plenty of fun—we hosted a Pride Family Picnic on Saturday; a huge cookout featuring a few vendor booths, a mountain of hot dogs, and lots of yard games.

The retreat was also designed to allow for lots of free time, so that people could explore Rolling Ridge, go kayaking, walk the labyrinth, rest, and do any other practices that bring them joy.

I felt so wrapped in queer joy and community as we talked, ate, prayed, and played together. It was an honor to spend time with the facilitators and participants of this program's inaugural year.

The most powerful part, however, was hearing from older LGBTQ folks, many of whom told me,

»»» **“NEVER IN MY LIFETIME DID I THINK THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WEEKEND WOULD BE POSSIBLE.”**

God is good.



SOUTH CHURCH CARES

SHE LOADS HER CAR, MEETS HER TEAM, AND THE MAGIC BEGINS

For the last eight months, a small ad-hoc group of volunteers who call themselves South Church Cares has been working with the International Institute of New England setting up apartments for incoming immigrants and refugees. Immigrants are welcomed into the United States after a long, arduous process of application and an average wait of EIGHT YEARS. During this time, most are living in refugee camps in war-torn areas of the world. The camps are run with very strict guidelines and almost no opportunity for employment or schooling.

The team, led by Laurie Sorota, gets notified that a family is arriving within a week, or sometimes a few days. She then reaches out to her teammates to see who might be available to help with the job. They are tasked with initially cleaning the unit followed by provisioning household goods, cleaning supplies, and personal hygiene items. All the items are donated and kept in a storage facility in Lowell. Laurie goes to the storage unit and collects all the necessary items. She loads her car, meets her team at the apartment, and the magic begins.

Beds are set up, floors are swept and mopped, kitchen items are put away in cupboards, windows are washed, bathrooms are scrubbed, and a new home is made ready for the incoming family.



»»» WHEN THE FAMILY ARRIVES, USUALLY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

after many, many travel hours, each member of the family has a place to rest their head. This is their new home, and it is safe and welcoming.

To date, South Church Cares has set up 17 units and logged more than 200 volunteer hours. If you have flexibility in your schedule, are available weekdays, and would like to learn more about how to join this team, please reach out to Laurie Sorota at LaurieSorota@gmail.com or 978-886-3975.

If you would like to collect gently used/new household goods, cleaning supplies or personal hygiene items, please read about what we need and what to consider before donating [by clicking here.](#)



SPIRIT-FILLED AND EXCITED

5TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SNEUCC | JUNE 22 & 23, 2024

By Janet Clarke, Delegate to the Southern New England Conference

REV. DR. DARRELL GOODWIN'S SPIRITED PRESENCE

His sermon, "Build the Church on the Rock", reclaimed the name of Jesus, "Learning to be a rock as the Southern New England Conference means that we learn to stand together, walk together, pray together, worship together and lead together," he said. "That means there is no us and them, but it's all us."

KEYNOTE SPEAKER, REV. DR. ERICA STANGE-TREGAR

She shared an inspiring message, "God's Math." In a crowd rescue on a beach, a group of people formed a human chain to save a drowning family. "They came together and did together what not one of them, truly, could have done on their own. They saved lives, together," she said. That sounds to me like some "God Math." She continues to describe the UCC cornerstone fund as the "God Math", people investing money so others can borrow to fund needed projects.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF FINDHOPENOW.ORG

Each Sunday morning when we pray before the beginning of worship, we often ask God to help us to be present in worship, rather than perfect in our "performance." It's almost impossible to strive to be both perfect and present at the same time. If we desire to be present to the Spirit and each other, we can't show up wearing the armor of perfection. It becomes a shield that creates space between our truest selves, God, and the community. When we are present, we are not on the defensive, but rather we are open to discover more about ourselves and those around us. The SNEUCC initiative - Find Hope Now - is promoting a gospel of radical inclusion that lets people know that no matter who they are, or where they are on life's journey, there is a place of hope that will welcome them.

WISE : WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE, SUPPORTIVE, AND ENGAGED

This is an initiative of the National UCC, a resolution passed at synod to foster a welcoming environment for people with mental health challenges. The WISE Resolution passed overwhelmingly and was adopted by the SNEUCC. Congregations may now choose to become WISE Congregations, much like becoming ONA, with a process of education and discernment to become WISE. South Church has a long history of welcoming people with mental health needs and setting up special programs when needed. Lindsey Pacios, our delegate spoke out over Zoom to the conference and has been highlighted by the conference for her speech. I think she is the "Greta" of the WISE program.



The 5th Annual meeting of the SNEUCC left me spirit-filled and excited about the SNEUCC and the future of our church being known as welcoming to all—no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, loving community, and mission oriented.

[Click here to access reports](#)

ALL MEMBERS ARE MINISTERS

Dana Allen Walsh, Senior Pastor
Genevieve Hosterman, Associate Pastor
Sherry Tupper, Minister of Visitation
Cathy Meyer, Minister of Music
Taylor Graffum, Minister of Youth and Families
Nora Pelt, Communications Administrator

Joanne Smith, Finance Administrator
Andy Brien, Facilities Manager
Brian Gruhn, Engagement Coordinator
Dennis Forgue, Moderator
Janna Roop, Treasurer

DID YOU KNOW...

THAT IN 1989, A STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING STUDY OF THE STEEPLE REVEALED THAT WEIGHT-BEARING COLUMNS WERE SO COMPROMISED AND ROTTED, IT WAS IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING DOWN THROUGH THE NARTHEX!

By Char Lyons, South Church Historian



1992

Our current church building, the 4th Meeting House, was built in 1860. It cost \$16,000 and was built by church members Abbot and Clement. A gilded weathervane tops the spire steeple at 167ft. The next level down from the spire is the clock level. Next is the belfry level, on top of a stairway level, on top of the attic level. Then it is the organ or balcony level, and then the main Sanctuary and Narthex level, and the Fellowship Hall basement level. All of this is equivalent to a 16 story building.

Even with ordinary (and extraordinary) maintenance to a 165-year-old wood building, identifying and fixing missing or rotted wood all the way up will always be a challenge. In 1955, after damage from in-a-row hurricanes Carol, Diane, and Edna torqued the steeple three feet, the steeple and front face of the church received maintenance and decades old repairs, including removing the four corner spires from the belfry level. Steel beams were installed to reinforce the attic and sanctuary floors, and steeple base. This was done as part of a capital campaign called "Rise Up and Build" which built the 1956 addition for classroom and office space. Other steeple and exterior repairs were deferred to complete the addition.

In the 1970s, part of a major support column was replaced when much of it had rotted away! By the 1980s, steeple leaks become an issue to be addressed. Patch and spot repairs seemed to work. In 1985, the "Share the Spirit" capital campaign launched to raise funds to renovate the organ and loft space, and among other things, making plans for expanding the building, perhaps even parking on the roof! In 1987, heavy storms created more damage and leaks in the steeple and threatened the newly renovated organ. It seemed that a major but doable maintenance expense to re-side and weatherproof the steeple was in order. Contractors made emergency repairs and called for an immediate engineering evaluation of the structural integrity of the steeple and lower tower.

Throughout the 1988/89 study, emergency repairs continued, including using tarps and barrels to catch water. The study showed the steeple was in danger of collapsing due to many serious structural deficiencies within the steeple and in the supporting timbers of the tower. Significant powder post beetle damage and rot was found in a major 30-foot support column, as well. One level was referred to as the "Crush Level", even written on the plans to identify the danger. Upper leaks had caused integrity issues in the lower levels.

»»» THE BUILDING FAILED INSPECTION, REQUIRING IMMEDIATE REMOVAL OF THE SPIRE,

and action taken to keep the building safe for occupancy. Emergency bracing and scaffolding were erected to stabilize the tower and steeple.

The building expansion plans from Sharing the Spirit were shelved. Attention pivoted for a design plan to remove the steeple, starting with the spire to take off weight. Discussions began on whether the spire/clock/belfry levels should be fully restored, modified, or maybe not replaced at all. On August 16, 1990, the 65-foot spire was removed and placed on the North Lawn.

In January of 1991, the Board of Trustees Building Evaluation team reported to the Congregation the extent of the steeple condition and repairs required. Three designs were proposed with options from immediate repairs only, to full repairs and replacement, to removing the steeple all together to the roof line. The Trustees recommended full restoration of the steeple, at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million. On February 27, 1991, the congregation voted to fully restore the steeple, requiring other exterior replacement work of significant siding, copper roofing, architectural trim, and complete paint removal (including hazardous waste) and replacement.

On June 2, 1991, "The Renewing our Heritage Campaign" began with a goal to raise \$1.5 million for the steeple. This included contingency emergency repairs, continuing engineering assessments, fire detection and safety code upgrades, additional roof, tower, and building girding, addressing bell and clock level deferred maintenance and repairs, window and hardware repair throughout the tower and attic, all by an expected completion date of 1993-4.

Additional maintenance and repairs of the entire building were assessed, and recommendations were made on what to be done while experts and gear were on site. For instance, leaks into the office ceiling and outside wall were from the stained-glass window casings and roof lines from the two stories above. While the contractors and scaffolding were here, the Tiffany windows were removed, repaired and cleaned. The water-damaged areas were repaired, and new preventative roof work was installed. Incidentally, the Omega Ω symbol was put back upside down. Take a look.

Inevitably in July of 1991, greater environmental and lead paint concerns were addressed by the architects for an additional \$32K. On August 7, the section of the steeple clock and bell levels was removed to the North Lawn. With a significant portion of the steeple tower and roof removed, additional concerns arose for weather protection for the new organ and Narthex areas, and for the tower itself while on the ground. Costs, Costs, Costs, and the repairs had just begun...

As work progressed between 1991 and 1993, everyone pitched in to hold fundraisers. There were yard sales, a town-wide auction, and the best idea of all, The Steeple Chase, a road race. Children and youth held bake sales, can collections, lemonade stands, etc.

On January 25, 1993, the clock/bell tower section was raised back into place to coincide with the Annual Meeting. The spire was raised on September 9. The project and tangential work were wrapped up with a dedication service held on Sunday, October 16, 1994, for our 283rd anniversary.

Our New England Nor'easter's will always force water into somewhere no matter what we do. We have the opportunity to prevent urgent, critical repairs in the steeple for another 30-50 years with part of the next building campaign going toward steeple work. Let's continue to stem our current pesky leaks, fix missing clapboards, and to reinvest in the original \$16,000 building and \$2 million of 30 years ago, and the many thousands spent in the last centuries.

Fellow members Abbot and Clement built this church in 1860 for us in 2024, and



➤➤➤ TODAY WE DECIDE HOW IT IS USED AND HOW TO PAY IT FORWARD.

This 313-year-old congregation continues to modify, repurpose, and maintain a safe and inviting space for us in this historic church, for the future generations of members and visitors. What we really have is an historic congregation! We are still "The Church (and church) of the South Parish of Andover", established 1711.

AND NOW YOU KNOW.

CARING

>>> CONDOLENCES TO

- Marilyn Gulla on the death of her husband **Ernest Gulla**, on June 3rd.
- the family and friends of **Ruth Bodge** who died on June 21st.
- the family and friends of **Doug Halsted** who died on July 6th.

>>> WE CELEBRATE

- the birth of **Olivia Ozol** born to parents Juliana and Tom Ozol.
- the birth of **Hadley Gruhn Skinner** born to parents Emily Skinner and Brian Gruhn.

>>> IN GRATITUDE

Our deep thanks for your generous contribution. We appreciated the wonderful opportunity to share our mission as one of your Monthly Mission Partners. *With gratitude, Kathy Knight-Heat, Refugee Community Alliance-Ukrainian Support Project*

On behalf of our board and instructors, I want to express gratitude for all that South Church does for us. You house us for lessons, classes, jam sessions, recitals, and even our mailbox. You greet us cheerfully and we have made good friends in your community. *Valerie Walton, Executive Director, Merrimack Valley Community Music School*

Essex County Habitat for Humanity thanks you for your generous donation helping us to build new homes so deserving families can build new lives. *Sincerely, Kevin Hudson, Dir. of Charitable Giving*

Thank you for being so generous! Please extend our gratitude to all who contributed to this wonderful gift helping us serve more than 10,000 refugees in the past year. *Jeffrey Thielman, President & CEO IINE*

From all the dedicated NEADS Service Dogs for Veterans staff, thank you for your generosity. You make our work possible. *With gratitude, Gerry DeRoche, CEO*

Thank you for your donation allowing us to provide wonderful ministries to the Greater Lawrence community, *Gratefully, Leslie Burke, Communities Together*

Virginia and Philip Dennett always appreciated the people, the music and the community of South Church and a special thank you to Pastor Genna for her loving care. *Sincerely, Carol, Beth, & Mark (their children)*

Thank you for the support after my Mom's passing. Laurie and I appreciated the thoughts, prayers, and flowers. We are so glad to be a part of South Church! *Love, Gary Muise*

We are grateful for your donations helping us to meet an unprecedented demand and assuring our community that we will continue to be a resource. Thank you! *Lisa Smith, Executive Director, Neighbors in Need*

What a generous community you have! Your book drive has also been helpful. We had a request for a "giant print" study Bible with concordance from a visually impaired prisoner. Sure enough, we found one in the box from South Church! A beautiful leather-bound large print study Bible. Such a special moment. Thank you for making it happen. *Kelly Brotzman, Executive Director, Prison Book Program*

How wonderful of you to donate to Honduras Hope. Our latest project is a clean water system for San Jose. Currently folks walk three hours most months to haul water. *Thank you. Blessings always, Bill Briggs*

THE STEEPLE IS LIT IN LOVING MEMORY OF

>>> IN SEPTEMBER

John Atchinson

by his wife Deanna and family

Charles and Jennie Carey

by Lynda and Roy Paris

Our son, Hooks III

who shared his light with the world

by Susan and Hooks Johnston

Muriel S. & Edward D. White

by their daughter Carol Hopkinson

>>> IN OCTOBER

Gertrude & Fraser Colpitts and

their daughter Priscilla Colpitts Taber

by Robert F. Colpitts and Nancy Colpitts Aceti

Faith M. Look & Robert E. Look

by their daughters Linda Look & Deborah Hyde

Bruce S. Taylor

by his wife Charlotte and family

>>> IN NOVEMBER

Margaret and William Philips Foster

by their children Rachel, Bill, Karen and Cheryl

Our parents and

to honor our children and grandchildren

by Laura & Dale Lattanzio

*Please let us know if you would like to "light the steeple" in
memory of one of your loved ones.*

