

# SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Annual Report on 2019



[www.SouthPC.org/Welcome](http://www.SouthPC.org/Welcome)

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# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## THE REV. DEBORAH FAE SWIFT, PASTOR



2019 marked the fifth year since we became a 100% missional church – without a building – where all of our ministries are in the community, meeting the needs of people on site.

It also marked the sixth year for the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry. We have been at this long enough now to have the model evolve, the underlying assumptions be challenged, and the individual AoF's grow to the point of transitioning leadership.

In hindsight, it's been a year of amazing realizations and brilliant breakthroughs.

As we have said all along for the last ten-plus years, "God is doing something amazing with and through us; we just have to keep running along, trying to catch up and see what it is."

2019 was no exception.

Whether welcoming visitors from Los Angeles' Presbytery of San Fernando, Paul Grier from the Presbyterian Foundation in Jeffersonville, Indiana, or Rev. Dr. Ray Jones from the Presbytery Mission Agency in Louisville, Kentucky – whether packing up book orders for *The Church Has Left the Building* to be sent to California, Montana, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, or Idaho – being featured in our second national article by the Presbyterian News Service – or fielding requests for our one-day seminar from New Jersey, New York, or Tucson, Arizona – our "wee kirk" has been living a large national footprint. And that is all because of the work that each one of us – every Act of Faith member – every Deacon, Elder and AoF Leader – does, week in and week out, to spread the love of God and the presence of God's Spirit. People are contacting us to learn how to do what it is that we do, i.e. what it is that you all have developed by being brave enough to say YES! to God as you try new ways of "being the church."

In the pages that follow, you will see a small portion of those things reflected in the reports of our groups and in our vision for the future.

2020 will be a pivotal year for South and its financial sustainability. We continue to be reminded that NO church can be secure about its future; as the needs of the world change, the Church of Jesus Christ must be flexible in its ways of rapid response.

So ... what is it that we are faithful to? It's Jesus – his teachings, his commandments, and his vision. He is the constant in our lives; his Love endures forever, and he has placed us here to be his hands and feet, his hugs and laughter, to work for justice and transmit the joy that comes from knowing Him.

Faith, grace, and peace,

Deb      *Dear Lord, all we ask is that you give us the courage and faith to pray with integrity:*

***Put us where you want us, and show us what to do.***

## THE REV. LAURA HUNGERFORD BACHMANN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR



As I sit down to share some thoughts with you about the passing year, many images surface in my mind. I see our vibrant worship services, voices raised in song, hugs being exchanged, theological reflections and personal faith stories being shared. I see our youth running around the Strong Museum of Play and reflecting on *Harriet* over a meal. I remember the faces of the men in our emergency shelter and the generosity of the guests in St. Joe's hospitality room. I feel the love and care around the table at CLASS ACT and Food for Thought and the passion of those in the Micah Circle. I remember the peaceful space of Back2Center and the generous spirit embodied at the Food Cupboard. I hear the voices of our Mt. Hope World Singers and the running feet of our Milers. I see the partnerships being formed at Dinner and a Movie, the thoughts exchanged at Slow Sheep and the ideas wrestled with at Bible and Brew. I hear the sacred laughter of true friends echo across our acts of faith and remember the loving kindness I have witnessed being played out over and over in our interactions together. I can tell you that, for me, our wee kirk remains strong in the Spirit, faithful in mission and committed to one another. It is a joy to serve among you and I am so thankful for this community as a place to follow my call and walk alongside you as you each follow yours.

2019 has been a year of transformation for many of our Acts of Faith. As we enter our sixth year of life without a building, we are learning more and more about the rhythm of our AoF community; the ebb and flow of each ministry; the moments when some launch into a wider incarnation and others pull back for a season of rest and transformation. The only thing we know for certain, is that nothing lasts forever except for the deep, abiding love of our God who leads us into the world to be partners in creating the new life Jesus first proclaimed to his followers so many years ago. The challenge for us will always be to hold our ministries lightly, to listen for the still, small voice of God that tells us when to stop and rest and when to plunge ahead with courage and passion even when we cannot see beyond our next step. In this next five years, I expect we will continue to find that change is our only constant. Some of the ministries we could never imagine ending will either launch into new life beyond South's care or reach the natural end of their time to be relinquished and replaced by new ministries that once again answer some organic need we could neither have imagined nor predicted right now. At the core of who we are remains the deep desire I encounter often among our community: to be connected to God, to listen for the Spirit, to obediently answer the call to action or the command to lie still and wait while a new creation incubates and grows.

In the pages of this report, you can read all the details of our communal life together this year. Perhaps you too, will hear the echoes of our year in the anecdotes and reports you read. I invite you to take a moment to rejoice in all that God has done with us this year and then to turn your faces ahead and pray that dangerous prayer, "Lord, put us where you want us, and show us what to do." I look forward to seeing where the Spirit leads in 2020 and to traveling that path alongside all of you.

Grace, Peace, and Joy,  
Laura

# FACTS & FIGURES

## 2019 Local Acts of Faith Participants

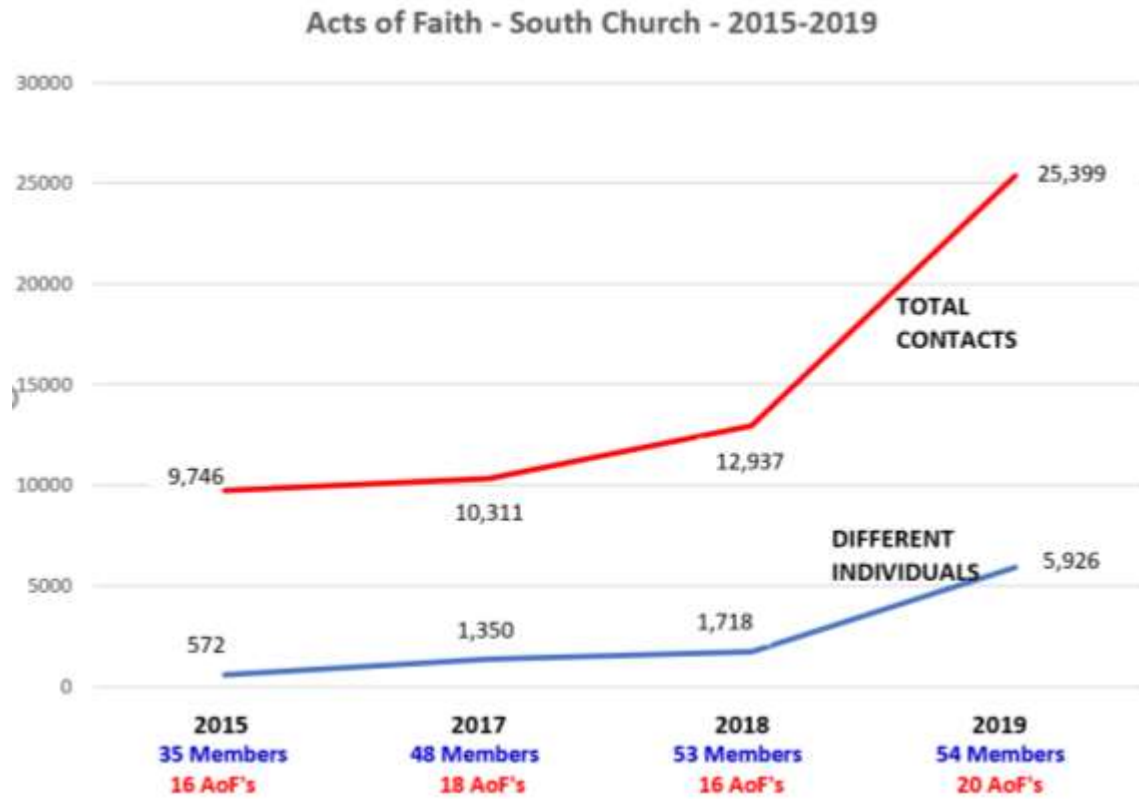
Act of Faith	# of Contacts	# of DIFFERENT Individuals Involved	Rationale
Back2Center	190	27	Avg 7/wk x 20 wks = 140 plus group events (hospital, bedside visits and 4 meals together) + 3/wk x 10 wks = 30. 10 Food Baskets at Thanksgiving and 10 at Christmas
Bible & Brew	210	12	Avg 5/wk x 32 wks = 160 + 5/wk x 10 wks=50 Total 210
CLASS ACT	150	13	avg 6/wk x 25 wks = 150
Dinner & a Movie	80	9	saw 80 different movies this year. Avg 2 people/wk x 40 wks=80, plus the workers at the grill and the theater who see a new "church"
Food for Thought	432	14	avg 9 x 48 wks = 432
Fellowship of Faith	2,184	77	67 different people = plus 10 visitors, avg 42/wk x 52 wks
LOL Youth Group	300	14	10 kids + 4 adults; avg 8/wk x 25 sessions (52 wks - 16 for Milers - August - 1 wk off/mo = 25) = 200 +adults= 300 contacts.
Matthew 25	9,056	172	8 South and partners for hospitality + 6 (dinner teams from other congregations) = 14 participants; Avg Sun. team=3 x 3 events (9);avg Monday and Tuesday = 1 person x 50 events (50); Dinner Teams = 4 people x 2 events (8); Canvassing = 2 x 25 apartments (50); Rallies = 3 people x 3 events (9); Street outreach = 1 person x 5 events (5); People SERVED at each of the above (8,911) ... <b>TOTAL CONTACTS</b> = 9,068. <b>Different People</b> ... Rev. Laura plus others ... 14+2+3+1+2+ est.150 different guests = <b>172</b>
Micah Circle	427	311	9 Micah members = avg. 6 x 10 meetings=60 contacts for meetings; + Refugee Dinner (130) + May Palestinian talk (12) + June Refugee Picnic (100) + June Cobb's Hill Manor picnic (105, 80 of whom were new to us) + Fair Housing Demonstration (20) = 427 contacts
Micah: RAIHN	152	126	# of South Participants - Total—6, # of times we stayed overnight--8 person nights over 4 rotations (32 contacts), # of people we helped (total) through RAIHN on those nights (estimated)--120
Micah: Cobbs Hill Caroling	48	48	# of South Participants—13; # of people involved--35
Monroe Milers	2,144	96	32sessions x 100 (to allow for absences) = 3200 contacts .... 32 practice sessions x avg 42 youth runners (1,344) - 57 different kids; 39 different coaches ... avg. 25 each time ... 25 x 32 (800)

<b>Mount Hope World Singers</b>		6,120		4,805	34 rehearsals x Avg. attendance 40/rehearsal (1,360); 45 different singers + audiences (Eastman Prism concert attendance 6,000 + ROC SALT 150 + two Nazareth College total 160 + REACH homeless shelter 35 = TOTAL audiences 6,345). Estimate at most 25% of audience returns for more than one, so 75% new/different people = 4,760
<b>NL Food Cupboard</b>		182		53	<b>1,695 meals provided in 2019.</b> 5 volunteers, 48 regular visitors. Each time 4 guests and 3 vols = 7 people x 26 times (182)
<b>NLoM</b>		1,144		52	avg attendance = 20 x 52 wks = 1,040 plus attendees to other sponsored events, but they are counted separately (Barbeque, Praying Hearts, Caroling, etc.). 45 have signed in, but estimating 15% who don't over the year (52 different people)
<b>Praying Hearts</b>		50		17	10 avg participants x 5 meetings = 50
<b>Sing for Joy</b>		965		42	17 members + 5 Meadows people who sang at least once + 20 who listened on Wed. night = 42 diff. people involved; avg. 10/wk x 84 events (Wed. and Sun every week) = 840 contacts for participants + 35 caroling recipients + 5 listeners every Wed. night x 42 wks = 90
<b>Slow Sheep</b>		10		10	Avg 2/walk x 5 walks
<b>Sonray Fellowship</b>		888		40	3 volunteers and pastor from South + 1 from Faith Temple, 2 staff people avg. att. = 30. Total 37 people x 24 services = (888) 40 different people
<b>SouthHeart Fellowship</b>		667		28	4 SPC volunteers+ pastor +2 from other churches (Faith Temple and CoS) = 7 volunteers. Avg. att. =22 Total att. = 29x 23 services = 667. 28 different attendees (including RPC staff)
<b>TOTALS &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>		<b>25,399</b>		5,966 Adjusted to <b>5,926</b>	We can name <b>32 people who are in multiple Aof's</b> , so even accounting for extras we might have forgotten (we will use the number 40), that brings the total number of DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS whose lives are touched by our ministry to <b>5,926</b> .

The Acts of Faith Model only collects figures once a year for the purpose of soliciting grants and other financial support. These figures demonstrate the far-reaching effect of the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry. South is a church with a denominational membership of 58. An additional eleven people are Affiliate Members (retaining membership in their home church but choosing to worship with us) and six more are Constituent Members (those who may or may not be Christian but who choose to align with our Acts of Faith). 250 people are involved in our Acts of Faith on a weekly basis during the program year.



Here is how our model of ministry has been working for the last five years.





# SECTION #1 – OUR MINISTRY & MISSION



## IN THIS SECTION:

- Individual Acts of Faith (alphabetical order)
- Where They Meet
- When They Get Together
- What They Did in 2019

*Thank you to all who contributed the following reports of their 2019 activities.*





# Back2Center



**Description:** Mid-week, casual worship in a conversational style. No dogma. No judging.

**Where/When:** Thursday, 6:30PM, at Harbortown Homes in the Charlotte neighborhood.

Our casual worship service continued to meet weekly on Thursday evenings. The first half of 2019 there were a lot of neighbors who were sick and/or in the hospital. Participants made travel arrangements and we visited our “tribe” to bring them the love of God.



In the past, we had taken the summer off, but this year we decided to have Summer Evening Prayer in Charlotte. We met at the Movie Room in the high-rise and if it was too hot outside, we stayed there. For the evenings cool enough to be outside, we sat, talked, and prayed for each other, for our neighbors, our community, and our world.

**LuAnn Valentine** became a new member of South Church – the first PC(USA) member to come from our New Worshipping Community through a New Member class with Pastor Laura. She began to assist **Sonya Kennedy**, the founder and leader, in composing the worship liturgy every week and in September, when we resumed our regular weekly service, LuAnn wrote the Opening Prayer!

Although our attendance has been low lately, the Holy Spirit has been moving! We had monthly communion and were able to distribute 10 food baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas with the help of the New Life Food Cupboard Act of Faith.

We continue to be a prayerful and supportive group for the entire Charlotte community!

Because of many changes within the group – people moving, health concerns, etc. – we have decided to take a period of discernment in the New Year and pray about what’s next for this meaningful and special ministry as we move into our 6th year! We invite you to pray for our discernments, too, as we continue to give thanks be God!





# Bible & Brew

**Description:** Bible for the Thinking Person. For whom was it written? What does it say to us today?

**Where/When:** Monday, 10AM in the Movie Room of the Harbortown Homes high-rise. All are welcome.

In 2019, Bible and Brew continued to meet on Monday mornings, but during the summer, the group shifted from weekly meetings to by-weekly on the first and third Mondays for the remainder of the year. (Beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>, we will be returning to our weekly schedule.) Settling into the Movie Room at Charlotte Harbortown Homes, we moved occasionally to the beautiful outdoors during the good weather.

Moving outside attracted the interest of a few onlookers, and though none of them joined in the discussions, we often noticed them listening in.

A young woman who was new to the Rochester area found Bible & Brew through Google!

An average of five to six participants attend each time. In December, a young man called the South office asking about Bible and Brew. Perhaps he will join us in the new year.

After four years with B&B, **Barb Sixbey**, one of our founders, had to leave the group as her work schedule changed. **Sonya Kennedy**, the other founder, will remain as our leader with the resourcing of Pastor Laura.

We ended the year with the Advent study, "Straw for the Manger" which followed close on the heels of Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*.

Discussions are under way for what 2020 will bring to our Bible discussion group when we launch a multi-month study of *The Story*, a 31-chapter distillation of the Bible.

There's always more room around our table for those seeking a Monday morning Bible Study.





# CLASS ACT

**Description:** Christian Leadership And Senior Spirituality  
Applied Christian Thinking.

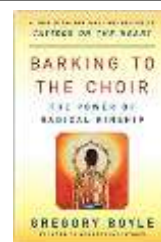
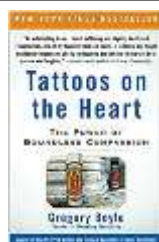
**Where/When:** Tuesday, 2PM in the Family Dining Room of the  
St. John's Chestnut Court. All are welcome.

CLASS ACT (Christian Leadership and Senior Spirituality, Applied Christian Thinking) continues to provide fellowship, spiritual and theological reflection, and engaging reading for a dedicated group, three Tuesdays a month from September through May. Led by Pastor Laura, we began the year with our continuing study of Fr. Gregory Boyle's *Tattoos on the Heart*, followed by Jimmy Carter's latest offering, *Faith* which took us to the end of the program year and into a summer of rest. In the fall, we reconvened and began reading the sequel to *Tattoos*, *Barking to the Choir*. These two books, exploring Boyle's experience ministering among the gang community in LA, provided deep theological insights, sparked many moments of holy laughter, and created the context for deep sharing around our own spiritual journeys. We closed out 2019 with the Advent study, *Straw in the Manger*, an offering of the denomination's Matthew 25 program, of which we are a member, which focused on preparing for Jesus' arrival through every day acts that help create God's kin-dom right here among us.

This fall, we mourned the loss of our brother, **Jay Bourne**, who entered the resurrection life in November. His ready faith, deep connection to "Spirit" and willingness to listen and consider viewpoints other than his own, all deepened our group experience and he will be missed.

In addition to the ongoing fellowship, spiritual care and theological reflection which thrive around our table, we particularly enjoyed one meeting during which we had the chance to reflect on the beautiful quilt one of our members had designed and created. The scene invited us into a whole new creation which sparked conversation and deep appreciation for the creative, artistic spark she had shared with us in her quilt.

As always, we are grateful for our partnership with St. John's Meadows and participation of the Spiritual Life staff person there, **Jan Kennedy**, who is a regular member of the group. We continue to welcome people of all faith traditions and spiritual experiences to join us at any time. If you are looking for a group that engages in meaningful conversation, actively cares for its members, and practices acceptance and love, then we hope you will join us – once or many times over.







# Dinner and a Movie

**Description:** Weekly gathering. Come either for the dinner, for one of the two double-feature movies, or both.

**Where/When:** Tuesday, 6:00PM at the Ugly Goat to eat, followed by movies at The Cinema Theater.

Dinner and a Movie (DAM) met weekly on Tuesday nights with dinner at the Angry Goat followed by movies at the Cinema, both at the intersection of South Clinton and South Goodman.

Several times it was dinner only because there was a special event at the Cinema. On those nights we stayed at the Goat for bluegrass music! Nine different individuals participated throughout the year.

The focus of this group has evolved to where we are now demonstrating to a diverse group of people what it means to be "church." DAM has become part of the Cinema family. We see (and share with them) how similar the regular movie attendees are to a church! A surprise this year is how we have also become part of the Goat family! Again, similarities to a church--people are very friendly to each other and a lot of camaraderie among people who would probably never have been friends otherwise.

Communities form around common interests and gain strength as the members connect and demonstrate caring for each other. Ritualistic behavior – whether a worship service, sitting in the same rows in the theater or the same tables in the bar & grill, familiar nicknames, standard meeting times and food all contribute to the sense of community whether it's a church congregation, or the group of "regulars" that hang out at the Angry Goat or the Cinema Theater. In both of those places, they have become aware that "church" can be defined however you want it to be. And within our group, we talk over dinner about the previous week's movie, sharing where we found God's Spirit in the story or in our own life as a result of what we saw.

If you like cinema ... if you like food and/or Bluegrass ... we invite you to come and check out Dinner and a Movie. You can join us for dinner only, for one or both movies only, or for an evening that includes all three. We'd love to have you with us.





# Fellowship of Faith



**Description:** Traditional Sunday worship in a non-traditional setting: prayer, preaching, singing & sacraments

**Where/When:** Sunday, 10:45AM, Chestnut Court of St. John's Meadows (Elmwood Ave.)

In August, we celebrated the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our wonderful partnership with St. John's Meadows. In addition to Pastors Deb and Laura, we enjoyed the preaching skills and messages of our Parish Associate, **Jane Watt**, and Elders **Mary Lee Miller**, **Barb Sixbey** and **Barbara Woodruff** when pastors could not be present. Additionally, the Rev. Dr. **Ray Jones** from the national church staff was with us again in the fall and celebrated Reformation Sunday with us. God is good, and we continue to grow.

With the sacrament of Holy Communion celebrated on the first Sunday of each month, we have seen the average attendance rise throughout the year; by December, we were hovering around 48 participants a week. On Christmas Eve, we celebrated communion in a candlelight service at 4PM in the Parks Room of Chestnut Court.

FoF enjoys the worship leadership of **Sing for Joy!** on Sundays from September thru May. In addition, we take up collections in support of other Acts of Faith, including the New Life Food Cupboard and Matthew 25, as well as national PC(USA) programs.

This year, for the first time, South Church elected an Elder to the Session who joined our church through Fellowship of Faith. Cheri Steron will become the first Ruling Elder ordained in our church who never belonged to either of the constituent churches (South or New Life) before becoming Presbyterian. God seems to have a continuing plan for us at Fellowship of Faith and we are excited to see it unfold.

Our **Sign Brigade** lets people know where and who we are. We are blessed with steadfast helpers - **Gordon Rickner**, **Connie Izzo & John Hust** - who put out signs directing & welcoming people to Chestnut Court off of Elmwood Ave. **Stena Rickner** keeps the paraments in season on our communion table & helps put up banners. **Nancy Wright** helps with special table arrangements. Gordon is our sound check person & makes sure batteries are in the waiting when needed. St John's staff (especially **David Bermudes**) has the Park room set with chairs each Sunday morning for our traditional worship service. Many, many thanks to all, who give of their time and talents, throughout the year!





# Food for Thought

**Description:** Community Book Group that weekly reads and discusses books of interest since 2010

**Where/When:** Friday, 4:30 p.m. at Mt. Hope Family Diner  
All are welcome even without advance reading.

Food for Thought is a group that formed almost a decade ago as one of the first Acts of Faith. Our title evolved from the fact that we meet at Mt. Hope Diner and the books we choose are food for heart, mind, and soul. How to be a better person, Christian, and follower of Jesus' teachings are all explored in our rich discussions reflecting the diversity of the group.

In addition to our weekly book group, we touch the lives of others through **Dinners for the Homeless** that we make and serve at REACH winter shelter where we served over 30 persons and are known as "the hot dog gang", **baby showers and Life Celebrations for our Servers, Individual Volunteer** assignments of our members, and **Collections of Food and Other** items for those in need.

This year, we welcomed a new member, Nita, who moved here from Syracuse, is a part of a 1001 New Worshiping Community there (Isaiah's Table) and learned about us through South's website.

Our reading this year included:

- Lenten Bible Study
- *The Point Is ...* by Lee Eisenberg
- *Uncommon Good* by Jim Wallis
- Richard Rohr's *Just This*
- Michelle Obama's *Becoming*, and
- Our Advent Study – *Straw for the Manger*

2020 will begin with Jim Wallis' book *Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus*.

Everyone is welcome, regardless of beliefs, race, age, politics, or anything else that we use to divide and separate ourselves, and we hope that you will join us on Fridays, 4:30 pm at the Mt. Hope Diner

**Amy, Barbara, Carol, Deb, Diana, Jane, Janice, Judy, Mary Beth, Mary Lee, Nancy R, Nancy W, Nita**







## Love-Joy Fellowship

new

**Description:** Occasional social gathering for fellowship and fun: potlucks, happy hours, parties, etc.

**Where/When:** Dates, times, places to be announced. Check calendar online for the latest.

When our friends (Randy, Arlo, and Dave) were here from the San Fernando Presbytery in Los Angeles in the spring, we hosted a Happy Hour at the Elmwood Inn to give people an opportunity to get together, socialize, and be interviewed about the Acts of Faith Model.

People attending had such a good time being together that the suggestion was made that we create a new AoF whose sole purpose is to get together and build our community through socializing, eating, laughing and sharing life events.

Initially, the staff thought this would be periodic planned events at local eateries. Over time, however, it became clear that Love-Joy was much more than that. While we do have some of those periodic Happy Hours, Love-Joy is also about church retreats, potlucks, and anything else that builds community among our Acts of Faith participants.

Moving into 2020, expect to see Love-Joy Retreats, Love-Joy Potlucks, and Love-Joy Happy Hours as the Spirit moves us.

**If one or more of you would like to volunteer to be the Love-Joy Events Coordinator, please contact the office.** You will be resourced by the office staff, but taking on the full scope of scheduling and executing these events is more than our staff can handle by itself.





## LOL (Love Our Lord) Youth Group

**Description:** Developing self-esteem, communication skills, conflict transformation techniques & field trips.

**Where/When:** 1st & 2nd Wednesdays, 6PM @ the Center for Youth; 3rd Sundays (Nov-Feb and May-July)

We've had another very good year with the kids. We have three families with between 6 and 10 youth in regular attendance. Larger outings, such as the picnic, saw as many as 18 participants. We have 4 regular adult leaders, **Barb Woodruff, Nancy Allinger, Janis Castrogiovanni and Barbara Durfee**. One of our families moved this summer, so we said a very sad goodbye to Cynai, Cynari and Chase Morgan. Two of the Simmons girls (Damyra and Faith) have been able to stay in touch with them, and they are doing well and enjoying the weather in Atlanta.

Throughout the winter and spring, we continued with our twice a month Wednesday evening gatherings at the Center for Youth for dinner and discussion. The cost of the meals was covered by various individuals and groups within the South Acts of Faith Community and provided by either Barbara Durfee or Janis Castrogiovanni. Nancy Allinger also frequently contributed treats. The discussions and activities led by the Center for Youth counselors were both interesting and, we hope, useful for the kids in navigating the storms of adolescence. And we thank the CFY – especially Elaine Spaul, Executive Director, for their scholarship.

We also had several excellent outings on weekends through the year. In February, we had the privilege of attending a Garth Fagan Dance presentation at the Jewish Community Center. The girls loved it and were thrilled to see that several of the featured performers had gone to the School of the Arts here in Rochester or to local colleges and universities. Another highlight was a trip to the Strong National Museum of Play in June. We ate in the food court and generally had a great time exploring the exhibits and especially “working” at the interactive Wegmans. Summer brought a picnic at Charlotte Beach. We had gorgeous weather and great food. Several of the older youth and parents were able to join us for that outing as well. This fall we were able to take the kids to a showing of the movie “Harriet,” which was a very moving exploration of the life of Harriet Tubman. We took the kids out for a meal afterward and the discussions we had about it were both eye-opening and enlightening. As always, we learn as much from them as they do from us.

In the spring and fall, the majority of the youth also participate in Monroe Milers, our youth running program. Even the ones who don't run were occasionally persuaded to walk and cheered on the runners at the spring and fall races. They also helped with the snacks.

We are excited for a new year with new ideas for meeting the needs of our group, especially of the older youth, as they transition into independent young adulthood. And we expect lots of fun as well!





# Matthew 25

new

## Description:

Providing hospitality and participating in street outreach for the poor and homeless, supporting community organizing and a compassionate presence.

## Where/When:

Tues. 9:30am-12:15; Mon. evenings during shelter season 7:30-10pm; third Sun. 1:30pm-4:45 @ St. Joe's House of Hospitality, 420 South Ave, 14620

South's new Matthew 25 ministry joined the AoFs with the arrival of Pastor Laura, who has been working at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality for the last two years. In Mt. 25, Jesus calls us to **feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bring drink to the thirsty**, and this Act of Faith gives people a way to do that. Every Tuesday morning, Pastor Laura can be found at St. Joe's listening to stories and connecting guests with food, clothing, hygiene items and laundry and shower services, as well as driving people to social services appointments or other locations around town. During shelter season, which generally extends from November to mid-April, Pastor Laura also works Monday nights, checking people in and providing hospitality. On a recent night, she was able to sign three people up for Section 8 housing. The list is only periodically open and currently has a wait time of multiple years. One St. Joe's residents has been on it for four years so far! Pastor Laura's work at St. Joe's also includes participating in their community organizing work by attending rallies and county legislature meetings and participating in canvassing for the city-wide tenant union. Until this summer when St. Joe's changed its schedule, she also led worship every few months for a Tuesday evening service.

This year, with Laura's arrival, we began to gather South members and provide opportunities for other churches to join us in participating in this work. Starting in the fall, four South members and people from two other congregations began providing hospitality one Sunday afternoon a month, while an additional group has donated food and clothing to the shelter. During the summer, Parkminster and Ogden Presbyterian Churches connected their communities with St. Joe's through us. Both churches now have committed to provide meals for the guests in St. Joe's emergency shelter this winter.

Our partnership with St. Joe's allows Matthew 25 participants to gather in community with the homeless and poor of our city. Over time, the relationships that grow in this space open our hearts and minds to a new way of being faithful followers of Jesus. We cannot sit with the guests of St. Joe's without hearing stories about the brokenness of our world, the redeeming presence of God's love amidst that brokenness and the hope sparked by faith even in the most desperate of times.

We welcome all who love Jesus and want to be transformed by that love to join us in this work. It will change your life.







# Micah Circle

**Description:** Supporting each other as we "do justice, love kindness & walk humbly with our God."

**Where/When:** Third Monday, 12:30PM at the South Church Offices.

The Micah Circle continued to evolve in 2019, beginning the year by supporting its ongoing projects for refugees and Palestinian rights, and continuing into the fall by expanding its work to include housing justice and increased outreach to the Cobb's Hill Manor community where we hold our weekly New Life on Monroe worship services. Specifically, we helped plan and lead two international refugee meals with our partners from Twelve Corners Presbyterian Church, Atonement Lutheran Church and Catholic Family Services; we arranged a community barbecue for residents of Cobb's Hill Manor and the South community, and we supported the fall Christians Witnessing for Palestine Film Series through purchasing an ad for their program, attending their films and hosting our own discussion of Palestinian issues in Israel. Members of the Micah Circle team continued to engage in their own local mission work through RAIHN (Rochester Area Interfaith Housing Network), the New Life Food Cupboard, and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality (reports of which can be found elsewhere in this report.)

The Micah Circle team met monthly, with a reduced schedule in the summer, to share stories from the field, engage in theological reflection around our work in the world, and support and pray for the various South ministries that gather in community with marginalized people in the Rochester area. In November, the Micah Circle accepted a lead role in our congregation's new commitment to the denomination's Matthew 25 ministry, an effort focused on dismantling structural racism, eradicating systemic poverty and building congregational vitality. During Advent, we entered a season of prayer, asking God to show us how South specifically should engage with these goals in the coming year.

As 2020 unfolds, we invite all those who desire a place to reflect on their mission experiences in their various ministries around Rochester to join us. We expect the group to continue providing a place to renew our spirits, share our stories, engage in theological reflection and discern the way forward in our Matthew 25 work.





# Monroe Milers

**Description:** Running group for ages 6-18. Runners learn about healthy eating, body care, commitment and camaraderie. 5K /1K graduation races.

**Where/When:** Wednesday, 5PM and Sunday Noon  
March-April, September-October

Monroe Milers is a high quality, developmentally appropriate youth running program. Over 8 weeks, kids train for a 5K or one-mile race. They walk/run in groups of six or seven with two to three coaches. Running games are a regular part of practice. Youth, ages 8 and up, train for a 5K race. There is a group for walkers. A young runners' group, ages 6 and 7, trains for a one-mile race.

The Monroe Milers held two training sessions in 2019, meeting twice a week for 32 total practice sessions over the year. 57 youth runners participated in the program, 41 of whom participated in both sessions. On average, 42 youth showed for each practice. 39 coaches volunteered over the two sessions. About 25 coaches were present at each practice.

This year the program met at St. John's Home, affording our runners lots of opportunities. We ran in Highland Park, Mt. Hope Cemetery, and city neighborhoods. In addition, we were located near three playgrounds. We welcomed St. John's residents to join us, and we had two residents who regularly helped with snacks and special runs.

At our fall end of season dinner, we recognized an outstanding participant, who epitomized our motto, "hard work pays off." Alistair began with the Milers several seasons ago as a walker. This fall, he completed his highly successful, debut season as a modified cross-country runner. All this while dealing with some significant health issues.

Fall season highlights: Our Milers girls rocked the Pumpkins in the Park race! Several established new Personal Records that day. Some former Milers are now serving as coaches, demonstrating the life-long benefits of running and leadership development.

Some of our youth coaches could not be with us on race morning because they were busy winning their cross-country meet. On the School of the Arts (SOTA) SOTA cross-country team, all four girls and six of the boys are former Milers. Three of them serve as coaches. The SOTA varsity cross-country took first place in the All City meet this fall!





# Mount Hope World Singers

**Description:** Community Choir singing world music in original languages that speak of peace and harmony. No auditions.

**Where/When:** Sunday 2-4PM plus concert schedule. Fall and Spring seasons.

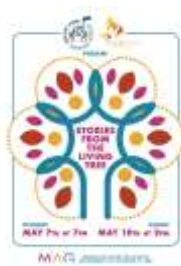
Our winter season began on January 27th with rehearsals at Community of the Savior in the regular Sunday afternoon time slot. Brian White continues as music conductor.

First performances were with the Taste of Song/Prism concert on February 17th at the Kodak Hall Eastman Theater along with 14 other Greater Rochester Choral Consortium groups. Tres Cantos Nativos showed the audience how much fun it is to sing in rhythms and sounds. We also sang from the Mezzanine level the song "O Music" along with the other choirs.

In April and May, we performed several pieces with Heather Roffe's dance students in both the Callahan Theater of Nazareth College and Reformation Lutheran Church, blending the dancers into our music, as well as engaging in a fundraiser for the Historic Calvary St. Andrews. The acoustics in this beautiful building were perfect for our voices. We enjoyed our June end-of-season picnic in the yard of Kathleen Fraser and Annika Bentley.

Instead of two end-of-season concert events, we are now working toward a unified spring event with a few smaller fall performances. Utilizing several familiar songs and quickly learned new ones, in December the choir was pleased to be the first group to perform for guests at REACH Advocacy winter shelter on West Main Street. The guests expressed thanks that we were there to warm up a cold winter Rochester evening.

Announcing a new framework for the choir, Rev. Laura Bachmann spoke on December 15th and explained that we have grown to the point that South can no longer resource us as needed. The singers began as a vision from the heart of **Mary Lee Miller**, an elder at South PC, who wanted to form a community choir to celebrate international music as a healing means of furthering peace in languages from around the world. Now, the time has come for the choir to move under the umbrella of SEAC <https://seacrochester.org/> a Rochester organization that offers close collaboration with groups in the Southeast quadrant of Rochester along with advertising, promotion and insurance coverage.







# New Life Food Cupboard

**Description:** Emergency Food Cupboard when needed.

**Where/When:** Congregation Beth Sholom (Monroe Ave),  
2nd, 4th, and 5th Thursdays, 9:30AM-noon.

This South Presbyterian Church Act of Faith serves those in need of food living in the 14620 and 14607 zip codes with a three day supply of food, usually the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays from 9:30 to noon. Congregation Beth Sholom has graciously hosted the New Life Food Cupboard 28 times in 2019 and provided storage for our food in between open dates.

This year, we served 48 different people including 12 children. We assemble a 3-day supply of dry goods for each household that is eligible to come once a month. We average 4 visitors and 3 volunteers each time we are open. With repeat visits and 3 meals a day, holiday baskets, and 28 donations to the library on Monroe Avenue, this accumulates to 1,695 meals provided in Monroe County in 2019.

Our regulars include: a grandmother trying to provide for her grandchildren after her daughter, their mother, died of cancer; a retired policeman recovering from cancer with very little family; a carless disabled woman who walks to the Temple; starving artists; and those short term visitors between jobs. Once we worked with a homeless man who'd had everything he owned stolen during the night. We are appreciated, called angels or friends, or told "I'm speechless" with gratefulness. The word is gradually spreading about our new location, and our goal for the future is to average ten visitors each time we are open.

Our food comes from three main sources: our Foodlink membership (which includes food covered by USDA grants, NYS HPNAP grants, and the United Way), Boy Scouts "Scouting for Food" and from our generous members and friends of South Presbyterian Church. We welcome non-perishable donations from other sources, as well.

Our work force came from our five steady volunteers: **Carole Utter** (chair for most of the year), **Janis Castrogiovanni** (current chair), **Char Schuth** (longest running volunteer and former chair), **John Hust** (most attended) and **Connie Izzo** (our reliable substitute). 211 and the library on Monroe Ave have been helpful in sending us referrals. The South Presbyterian Church also provided the office administration, bookkeeping, publicity, and staff leadership. Our food cupboard is fortunate to have adequate funding, and through our Matthew 25 commitment, we can continue for years into the future.







# New Life on Monroe

**Description:** Casual worship through dialogue, music, prayer, scripture and mutual concern.  
Open to the larger community.

**Where/When:** Sunday, 9AM at Cobbs Hill Manor  
(Monroe Ave. 14620).

New Life on Monroe (NLOM) continues to be an active and growing ministry graciously housed in Cobb's Hill Manor, an assisted living residence at 1175 Monroe Avenue in the Upper Monroe Neighborhood. This year, worship occurred each Sunday at 9 a.m. in the Wellness Room. Residents of Cobb's Hill Manor and a few former New Life Presbyterian Church members combined weekly for an average attendance of 20 participants – the highest single Sunday participation was 30 as we celebrated our first Christmas Eve service there.

Some of this year's highlights included: welcoming Pastor Laura Bachmann, Cereal Bowl Sunday, National Day of Prayer service, Cobb's Hill Grill celebration picnic, Halloween Party support, Thanksgiving Food Drive, and Reception of new SPC members – **Suzanne Bennett and Catherine Daniels**.

The nature of the community of worshippers has grown as participants have come to know each other through conversational sermons during which stories of faith formation shared in response to Scripture readings and weekly joys and concerns are shared. The care for each other was especially visible one morning during worship as a resident appeared at the door, motioned Pastor Laura to step away from the morning announcements, and shared that one of our regular participants, a resident of Cobb's Hill Manor, had died during the night. The gathered community joined Pastor Laura in prayer. Shortly after, a long-time member of the former New Life Presbyterian Church arrived to say that he had just learned that his wife had died following a long hospitalization. Again, the community expressed their prayerful support and presence. Our awareness of God's presence among us was palpable. We were so grateful for each other's presence in the face of two significant losses and the assurance of God's everlasting love! A memorial service for the Cobb's Hill Manor resident was conducted by Pastor Laura at Cobb's Hill Manor – the first we have been invited to lead there.

Spontaneously, at the end of the National Day of Prayer service, one participant asked, "When will we do this again?". Out of his question, a new Act of Faith was birthed in September 2019 at Cobb's Hill Manor. We are proud to claim this new ministry – "Praying Hearts" which is profiled below.





# Praying Hearts



**Description:** Monthly community gathering for prayer and short reflection on a Bible passage. All are welcome regardless of faith tradition or belief system.

**Where/When:** The third Thursday at 10am in the Wellness Room at Cobb's Hill Manor, 1175 Monroe Ave., 14620.

In May, the staff at Cobb's Hill Manor asked us to lead a service for the National Day of Prayer. We had no idea who would choose to come or whether the gathering would prove meaningful for the community. Somewhat to our surprise, thirteen people gathered for a service of blessing we had prepared and to share a time of prayers for the community. Before we left that day, several people asked us whether we could continue the prayer group. Over the summer, we spent some time praying ourselves and discerning whether God was calling us to this ministry. Barbara Durfee and Pastor Laura agreed to lead the group, deciding to meet monthly.

We began Praying Hearts in September and spent the following months experimenting with various formats. We have now settled on spending the first part of our hour on theological and spiritual reflection based on the Bible passage chosen for the day, followed by a time for gathering the community's prayers. The leader then closes the gathering in an extemporaneous prayer that reflects the joys and concerns raised. This ministry includes both participants of the regular Sunday morning worship at New Life on Monroe and residents of Cobb's Hill Manor who do not attend the Sunday worship.

We have noticed that our presence in the building during the week has strengthened the ties of the New Life on Monroe community and has allowed us opportunities to spend time getting to know people in ways that are not possible on Sunday mornings.

It is a joy to see how the simple act of gathering to pray together can knit the whole community together in deep and transformative ways.





# Sing for Joy!

**Description:** Community sing-along, blended with 4-part choral music and optional Sunday morning worship leadership (not required). No auditions.

**Where/When:** Wednesday, 6:30PM, Briarwood of St. John's Meadows (Elmwood Ave), Sept-June.

Sing For Joy!, an Act of Faith of South Presbyterian Church, continues to meet regularly most Wednesday evenings in the Briarwood building of St. John's Meadows; we observe a summer hiatus during the months of July and August. Sing For Joy! currently comprises seventeen members: **Sue Bovay, Carol Curtiss, Marirose Dempsey, Amy Doty, John Hust, Sonya Kennedy, Carole Knight, Mary Lee Miller, Holly Powell, Andy Pratt, Fran Ratcliffe, Nancy Rice, Gordon Rickner, Stena Rickner, Barb Sixbey, Mary Taglieri, and Jane Watkin.**

New members are always welcome (no audition required)!

Wednesday evening meetings consist of two parts; we begin each week with a half-hour open sing of favorite hymns, frequently attracting passers-by to stop in and listen or even sing along! We then transition to about an hour of choir rehearsal, practicing repertoire for use at Fellowship of Faith, South's Sunday morning worship Act of Faith at St. John's Meadows. The Sing For Joy! Choir typically provides a choral offertory anthem, introit and response, and leads the congregation during hymns at Fellowship of Faith.

In 2019 we began exploring new repertoire inherited from other neighborhood churches, including Calvary St. Andrews and New Life Presbyterian, and have enjoyed challenging ourselves with unfamiliar hymns and anthem arrangements. Several members helped lead an evening of Christmas carols at Cobbs Hill Manor, and the choir performed special music at our Christmas Eve service at St. John's Meadows. We look forward to sharing our love of music and choral singing with the South Presbyterian Church community in 2020 and beyond!





## Slow Sheep

**Description:** Walking meditation group.

First hour walking, followed by breakfast at a local eatery. Come for one or both activities.

**Where/When:** One Saturday a month. 9AM walk, 10AM eat, Parks and public lands. (April-October)

Slow Sheep met monthly April to October. Ten different people walked during the course of our 2019 season. This is a group for walking meditation – not hiking – not running. We engage in what some might think of as “seasonal sauntering” or “monthly meandering.” The objective is building community while developing our spirituality.

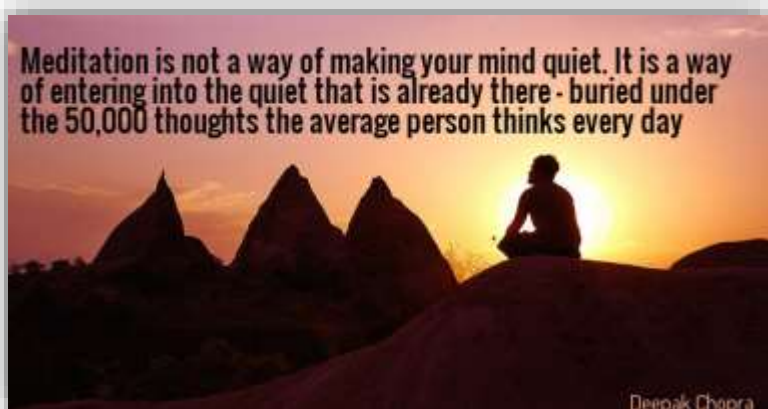
Our goal for this year was to highlight the AoF Neighborhoods. We tried to do a walk in each neighborhood where we have an Act of Faith which meant that we were in the Highland Park area, Charlotte neighborhood, in and around Cobbs Hill, and throughout the South Wedge, to name a few places.

For the first time, one of our walks was cancelled due to ***snow in April!***

It was interesting to see how each AoF reflects the geographical area it is in.

This group is about fellowship. Somehow, being in an outdoor setting and exercising opens us up to communicating with each other and communicating with God in a new and different way. We especially enjoyed exploring our new neighborhood in the South Wedge, an area not familiar to many of us.

We are wide open for 2020 location suggestions; we like to move around to the west and east sides of the city and stick to public spaces or our county’s beautiful park system. Each time we meet, we walk at 9am and follow our walk with breakfast at a nearby café or diner. If you have a location idea for either our walk or breakfast, please talk with Barb Sixbey, the AoF Leader for Slow Sheep.







## SouthHeart Fellowship

**Description:** Interactive, conversational worship in the Chapel of the Rochester Psychiatric Center. Music, Prayer, Scripture, Discussion & Coffee

**Where/When:** 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 3PM at RPC  
Contact staff for instructions.

Our ministries at the Rochester Psychiatric Center continue to grow and touch more lives. Whether leading worship in the Chapel (SouthHeart) for the civil patients and staff, or in the Regional Forensic Unit (Sonray) for those who are court-placed, our volunteers bring with them the sense of community and sharing the Good News of God's love for everyone they meet.

This year, we provided 24 services for both groups, giving us a presence at RPC every week of the month (with the exception of those times when there is a fifth week in the calendar and summer vacation).

SouthHeart is followed by a coffee/tea social hour, and Sonray by a juice/lemonade social "happy hour." SouthHeart averages 20 participants and Sonray, 30+. On three occasions, we have had to bring in extra chairs for Sonray.

South's volunteers: **Amy Doty, Gordon & Stena Rickner, Judy Wandtke, and Carleen Wilenius** have inspired others to join us, including Anthony from Faith Temple, and Chris from Community of the Savior. In addition, **Mary Lee Miller and Nancy Rice** joined us for our Christmas morning worship.

After many, many years in the RFU, one of the patients had earned the right to go to the Chapel with staff in order to worship at Thanksgiving. He was stunned to see lit candles. "Are those real flames?" he asked. "Yes," Pastor Deb replied. "I haven't seen those in years!" he said. "I had forgotten how beautiful they are in real life." It's those moments that speak to us of God's Grace and healing through the Spirit. We are always happy to welcome others who want to have their lives touched by these brothers and sisters. Just talk with Pastor Deb.

**(We are prohibited from taking pictures of patients in both of these AoF's.)**



## Sonray Fellowship

**Description:** Casual worship in the Regional Forensic Unit of the Rochester Psychiatric Center. Volunteer orientation required by RPC.

**Where/When:** 1st & 3rd Thursdays, Rochester Psychiatric Center. Contact SPC Office for information.



A different kind of Act of Faith – Firebird Spirit – was started three years ago as the outreach and educational AoF that would be our way of sharing the Acts of Faith Model with others around the country.



In the last two years, as our story has spread around the country, we have had an increasing number of inquiries – either to buy our book, *The Church Has Left the Building*, or to be in conversation with us about how Acts of Faith are created, and how to administer them.

Last year, the Presbytery attorney advised us that, in order to keep the church safe from any legal repercussions or liability, we should create a separate nonprofit that would be related to South, but which would be its own legal entity. That's what we did this year.

Firebird Spirit, Inc. was established in August of this year when its Board of Directors met for the first time. For more information about Firebird, our work, the Board and its relationship to South, please visit our website: [FirebirdSpirit.org](http://FirebirdSpirit.org).



In December of this year, Firebird Spirit filed the paperwork with the IRS in order to become a tax exempt organization able to receive deductible contributions.

Through Firebird Spirit, we have begun working – or been approached to work – with churches and presbyteries in Trenton (NJ), Los Angeles (CA), Utica and Albany (NY). Pastor Deb will be traveling to Tucson, AZ after Easter to share information with two presbyteries there.

The goal of the Session and the Firebird Spirit Board is to move toward cost sharing of salaries and office expenses with South. 2020 will be an important year for that to take root.



The launch of Firebird in the fall – through a mailing to every Presbytery Leader in the Synod of the Northeast and the pastor of every church in our Presbytery – is the culmination of Pastor Deb's work for the last couple of years when the Session asked her to develop a plan for financial sustainability for our church.

Potentially, Firebird Spirit holds a key to providing income through consulting services as we live out our mission "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in [my] way of life" (Mt. 28:19 – MSG). Our local Acts of Faith provide for the "near" manifestation of that. It is Firebird Spirit that helps us to fulfill our mission to the "far" places of the world – beginning with the Presbyteries and churches that are contacting us.

Members of the Board include:

**Karen Thomas** (President) – member of South, living in Tucson, AZ, retired from Kodak with an MBA from UR's Simon School. **Pastor Laura** (Vice President); **Kevin Fuller** (Treasurer); **Pastor Deb** (Secretary and Executive Director) **Sonya Kennedy** (member of South's Session); **Steve Longley** – retired marketing executive completing studies at Princeton Theological Seminary and Rutgers University; **Rev. Dr. Rachel McGuire** – founding creator of the Community Learning Lab, Executive Director of Innovative Models for Community Learning, Inc. and an American Baptist pastor.

## SECTION #2 – 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

### IN THIS SECTION:

- February Leadership Retreat
- L.A. Visitors
- Firebird Spirit One-Day Workshops
- Ordination of the Rev. Laura H. Bachmann
- Summer Retreat at Pittsford
- Welcoming totally new, New Members
- National Church Connections
  - Ray Jones' Visit
  - Ecumenical Advocacy Day
  - National Articles



## AOF LEADER RETREAT (FEBRUARY)

In February, the AoF Leaders joined friends of South from the larger community in order to hear news about Firebird Spirit's development and the churches that were contacting us from around the country. It was both a brainstorming session and an opportunity to talk about the best ways to increase income for the church. Members of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry and Board of Trustees were present, as were people from the GVP Administration and members of other churches who have been helping South through our Resource Development Team.

Steve Longley – the former marketing executive, turned seminarian – came up from Princeton as part of his contribution to South. (Steve now sits on the Board of Firebird Spirit.)

Through conversations that day, the desire was expressed that we should invite Ray Jones for a return visit because so many people were new to us since his last trip here. We thought it would be helpful to focus again on how to tell our collective story and the result was his visit at the end of September.



## EXAMINATIONS ON THE FLOOR OF PRESBYTERY & VISITORS FROM L.A. (MARCH)

On her way to ordination, **Laura** was examined on the floor of Presbytery with several of us in attendance for moral support. At the same event, our own **Summer Sattora** was also examined and advanced on her journey toward ordination, as well. Summer is now considered a Candidate for Ministry. Laura fielded questions along theological lines as her faith relates to her understanding of call and why South is the place for her.

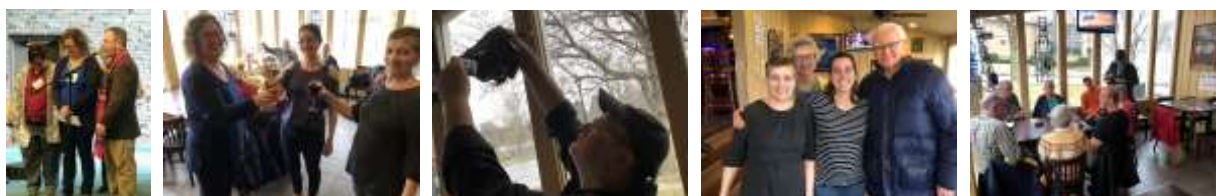
That important day with our sister churches coincided with our visitors from Los Angeles – **Rev. Randy Lovejoy, Rev. Arlo Tysinger and videographer David Frame**. Throughout their four days here, the trio filmed interviews with members of South and the Presbytery as they began to assemble videos to show the churches back home what we are doing through the Acts of Faith Model. (Two of those videos can be seen at [SouthPC.org/Welcome](http://SouthPC.org/Welcome).)

The end of their visit featured a happy hour at the Elmwood Inn – the genesis for one of our new Acts of Faith which we have since named after Randy – the Love-Joy Fellowship – where we not only conducted interviews and had time to socialize, but we also celebrated with Summer and Laura their respective accomplishments.

A special treat was when Arlo wanted her picture taken with Gordon, Stena, Barb, and Sonya (who was finishing up a cruise and not able to be there) because she loved meeting the real people who were

profiled in *The Church Has Left the Building*. It was, indeed, a festive time for all, and during their visit, our L.A. guests experienced five AoF's plus this Saturday gathering that's pictured here.

It should also be noted that every time South welcomes visitors from other Presbyteries or the national church, the **Presbytery of Genesee Valley** – through our Presbytery Leader, **Rev. Amy Williams Fowler** – helps to share the cost and treats our guests to a lovely dinner so that they can explore how the churches work together here in this part of the world. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of our Presbytery.



## FIRST OF FIREBIRD SPIRIT ONE-DAY SEMINARS (MAY-JUNE)

Based on our work over the last eight years, Pastor Deb has created a presentation for churches and presbyteries on the state of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, called **C-21**. Two presbyteries and seventeen churches (just under 50 people) gathered outside Trenton, NJ to hear what she (and we) have to offer.

In the course of the afternoon break-out session, eight churches in the greater Trenton area decided that they want to implement the AoF Model to do multiple-church ministries together in the inner city. As a result, they created on the spot the **Acts of Faith Working Group of the New Brunswick Presbytery** and are continuing to work with Firebird Spirit in 2020 to enact their combined ministries.



## ORDINATION OF THE REVEREND LAURA BACHMANN (JUNE)

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, we witnessed the ordination of Pastor Laura, thus completing a journey she began many years before she came to us as a seminary intern three years ago. Several of us – including Sing for Joy! – trekked over to Pittsford Presbyterian Church for the festive occasion. The home page of our website continues to have the link for a video of the service if you were unable to attend. What a joyous occasion. “The Force is strong with this one!”



## SUMMER RETREAT AT PITTSFORD (JULY)

Thirty of us gathered at Pittsford Presbyterian for a day of spiritual retreat. While we deepened our own connections with God, we also shared feelings, thoughts and visions for the future of our Acts of Faith.



## WELCOMING TOTALLY NEW, NEW MEMBERS (SPRING & FALL)

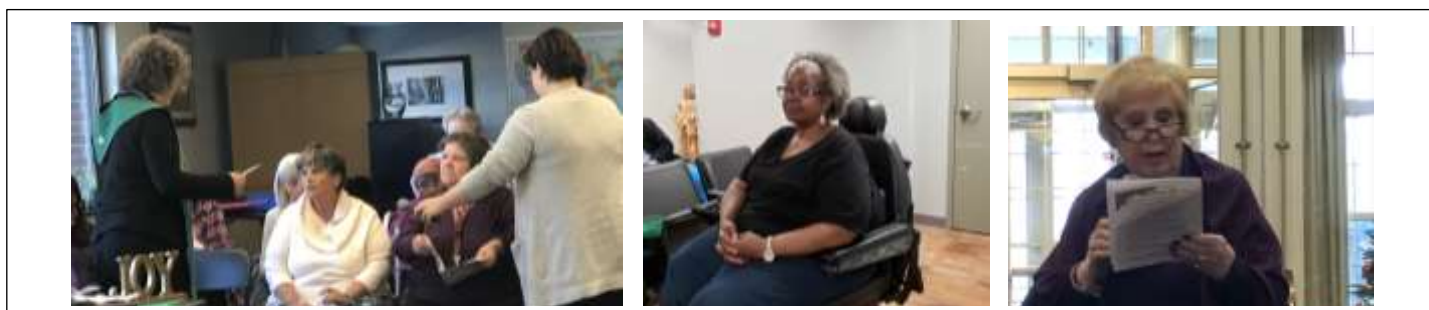
It is always a joy to welcome new members of any variety (Active, Affiliate, or Constituent). In 2019, we welcomed five Affiliate Members, but 2019 brought another “first” into our midst – four new Active PC(USA) members who had not been Presbyterian prior to joining and came to us through all three of our weekly worshipping communities.

**Suzanne Bennett** and **Catherine Daniels** joined through New Life on Monroe (NLoM), **Cheryl Steron**, through Fellowship of Faith (FoF), and **LuAnn Valentine**, through Back2Center (B2C).

Both FoF and B2C are currently recognized as New Worshipping Communities by the national church’s 1001 New Worshipping Communities initiative. (NLoM is applying for that status in January of 2020.) All three of these ministries did not exist before we began the Acts of Faith Model; through the sale of both South and New Life church buildings, we have been able to start three new “churches” as ministries that are located where people need them to be. And through these worshipping communities, Jesus is calling people to become part of the Body of Christ, i.e. his Church.

The next important step for each of these will be as they move into leadership in our collective South Church. In 2020, Suzanne and LuAnn will both be serving on the Partners in Ministry teams of their respective faith communities. Cheri has become the first of these new leaders to be elected to serve on South’s Session. She will be examined, and, if the way be clear, will be ordained as a Ruling Elder in January of 2020.

God is continuing to do something creative and wonderful here at South through our growing membership and expanding leadership model.



## NATIONAL CHURCH CONNECTIONS (THE FALL)

This year we had three outstanding connections with our national denominational structure.

**First:** For the second time in four years, **the Rev. Dr. Ray Jones - Director of Theology, Formation & Evangelism for the PC(USA)** – come to South to live and experience the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry for four days. This time, though, we invited him to be the keynote speaker at a Fall Retreat for our membership with the theme: ***What's it to YOU? - We cannot share the Good News until it's Good News for us in our own lives.***

Recognizing that Ray's message might be useful to many beyond South, we invited our sister churches in the Genesee Valley Presbytery (GVP) who are part of the national Vital Congregations Initiative to join us for the morning session. [Note that this is the Initiative that Pastor Deb helped to create with her trip to Louisville a few years back when she was invited to be on the national Task Force for Vital Congregations. Rev. Dr. Kathryn Threadgill – who heads the initiative – came to visit South two years ago.]

Twenty-eight of us were joined by an additional 30 people from GVP churches as Ray led us through information and spiritual experiences to begin naming what the Good News is that Jesus brings to each of our lives. Members from each of our three weekly worshipping communities (Back2Center, Fellowship of Faith, and New Life on Monroe) were all present and engaged.

In the afternoon, Ray worked with only South people as we explored more about what it is to say YES! to God through our “wee kirk.”

While here, Ray experienced worship in Charlotte with Back2Center, the Food for Thought book group, New Life on Monroe, Fellowship of Faith, Mount Hope World Singers, and a dinner with our Presbytery Leader and her husband, Amy and Gene Fowler. He shared meals with our pastors as well as our AoF Leaders, and had a presentation about Firebird Spirit by our office staff. We explored funding options and learned of new initiatives about to be offered at the denominational level. Ray continues to be a friend of South Church and our Acts of Faith Community, and to have had three visits from the national church within a four-year period – in addition to the ongoing support we receive from **the Presbyterian Foundation through its Vice-President, Paul Grier** – is astounding.

**Second:** While participating with our Presbytery in the **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** in Washington, DC, Pastor Laura met the Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, who oversees the work that Ray Jones does.

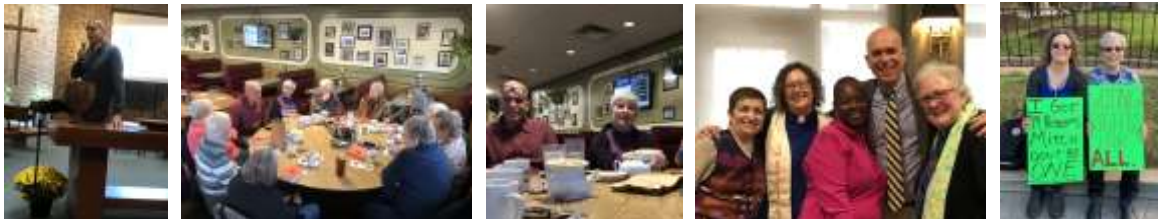
Advocacy Days are a time when churches around the country travel to our nation's capital in order to speak with legislators regarding our values – which in South's case include working with the poor, the homeless, and the hungry to establish justice as part of the KOG (Kin-dom of God).

We are on the radar with the national church for our work in this area and hope to build upon that relationship in 2020.



**Third:** The launch of the denomination’s Matthew 25 Initiative brought South again to national attention when our application was singled out by the **Presbyterian News Service**. Within moments of hitting the SEND button on our application, Laura was contacted by PNS and interviewed because of their interest in her accompanying essay answers. The result was a second national article about South in two years.

On a smaller scale, we were also included, mentioned by name, and Pastor Deb was quoted in an article about Resurrection Churches that appeared in the fall issue of **Presbyterians Today**. (The author of the article who interviewed Deb was the same woman who authored the Advent study that many of us used this year: *Straw for the Manger*, i.e. Rev. Sherry Blackman.



**WHAT FOLLOWS IN THE 2019 ARTICLE FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN NEWS SERVICE.**

## ‘Put us where you want us, and show us what to do’

**Matthew 25**    October 25, 2019

### Through its Acts of Faith, South Presbyterian Church embraces Matthew 25 invitation

*by Mike Ferguson / Presbyterian News Service*

LOUISVILLE — A congregation without a building but with a proven record of innovation for serving the Rochester, New York, community — especially those living in the city’s margins — has accepted the Matthew 25 invitation. “I am so excited to have this national focus on a passage that has been a guiding light for our ministry for a long time,” said the Rev. Laura Bachmann, associate pastor at South Presbyterian Church.

The Matthew 25 invitation calls Presbyterians to actively engage in the world through three focus areas: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty. To date about 245 congregations and 25 mid councils have accepted the invitation, first extended April 1.

Bachmann began her work at South Presbyterian Church Jan. 1, working alongside the church’s longtime pastor, the Rev. Deborah Fae Swift.



After selling its building five years ago, members and affiliate members of South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, meet in a variety of worship settings, including the assisted living center shown here and a psychiatric center. (Photo courtesy of South Presbyterian Church)

Having sold its building five years ago, the church's 53 members, together with a number of affiliate members, serve the Rochester community through its Acts of Faith model of ministry. The church defines the model as "an organic grassroots ministry growing out of the needs of people." A group — which can be as few as two people — asks the session for permission to start up a ministry. The session has just one question before granting its approval: does it create energy and excitement?

"We understand that to mean the Spirit is present," Bachmann said.

The model is drawn from this prayer: Put us where you want us, and show us what to do.

"It's brand new but it's old, like the early church," Bachmann said of the ministry model. Ministry areas are varied, with some more overtly religious than others. The Dinner and a Movie group meets weekly to

dine, view a movie and discuss the previous week's film. The group typically occupies the "P" row at Rochester's Cinema Theater. "'P' for 'Presbyterian,'" Bachmann pointed out.

Monroe Milers is a youth running program in which youth train near the Mt. Hope Cemetery. They sometimes combine training and learning by visiting the gravesites of notable Americans including Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony.

New Life on Monroe is a weekly worshipping community that's housed in an assisted living facility serving a diverse population.



The Rev. Laura Bachmann is associate pastor at South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York. The church's session recently voted to accept the Matthew 25 invitation.

Serving at South Presbyterian Church "allows me to live out my faith in a meaningful way, true to what my call is," Bachmann said. "I'd worked alongside Catholic Workers for two years and I wanted to continue that work (after coming to South). They said, 'Great! How can we do that with you?'"

Through its Sonray Fellowship, South Presbyterian holds twice-monthly "casual, conversational worship" at the Rochester Psychiatric Center's Regional Forensic Unit for court-placed patients and neighborhood residents.

"We were the first people in the state allowed into those forensic units to do that work," Bachmann said. "It's in our DNA to go find people where they are. It's about allowing people to find their calling, then going out into the world to support that work."

Bachmann calls worship in the psychiatric center "rich work."

"They are there because something really awful has happened," she said. "They have deep questions about forgiveness and restorative justice, and deep faith questions."

The varied worship settings matter not a bit to South Presbyterian members and affiliate members, she said.

“We want to say you are always at church,” she said. “When I am at St. Joe’s (the Catholic Worker facility), I am a better pastor, preacher and person of faith for sitting in that building.”

A woman who’s been homeless for two decades attended Bachmann’s ordination service in July.

“I’ve learned from her the resilience of the human spirit and what faith can look like in a pinch,” Bachmann said.

South Presbyterian members and affiliates take over at St. Joe’s one Sunday each month so that the staff there gets a bit of a respite from its difficult work.

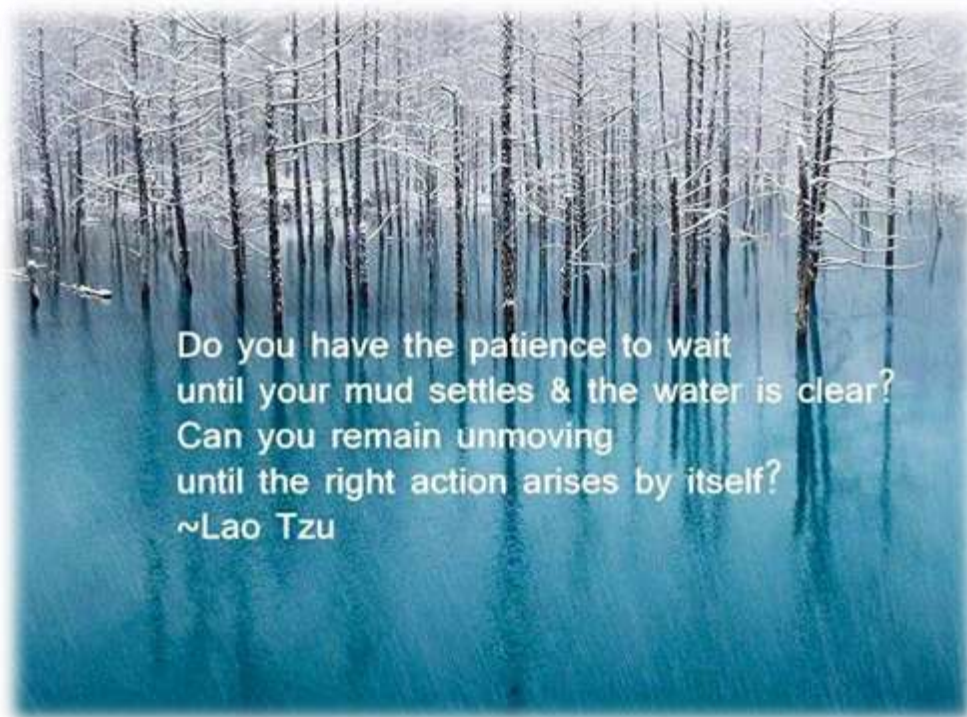
“We are able to be present there and embody our faith in a way I couldn’t do so deeply until I came here,” Bachmann said. “Some people are afraid to go in there, but I come away from there with deep joy. Maybe it’s because the Spirit is so present. That’s what I want other people to encounter.”

“So much of (Christian) mission is the empire model: Let me come in and fix you, rather than coming in humbly alongside and thanking people for welcoming me,” she said. “Can I sit here with you for a while? I hope (the Matthew 25 invitation) will inform those of us who want to address justice with the way we write laws, design transportation systems and decide who lives where.”

“Are we thinking about everyone?”



Without a building, worshipers at South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, have learned to worship in a number of settings. (Photo courtesy of South Presbyterian Church)





## SECTION #3 – BEHIND THE SCENES

### IN THIS SECTION:

- Staff
- Session
- Deacons
- Nominating Committee
- Personnel Committee

### STAFF

God has assembled an amazing leadership team here – both of the paid and volunteer variety. Each one brings to our community a life-time of talents, skills, knowledge, artistry, faith, commitment to their call, and a vast network of people that they call upon in the life of South Church.

***We thank God for them all, and for instilling in them the Spirit of Hope & Possibility as they lead us to seek the KOG.***



**THE REVEREND DEBORAH FAE SWIFT, PASTOR**

Deb is in her twelfth year as South's Pastor and Head of Staff.

**THE REVEREND LAURA H. BACHMANN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR**

Laura returned to South in 2019 after assisting us with pastoral leadership in 2018. She first came to us as a seminary intern in 2016.



**KEVIN FULLER, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

Kevin is in his 10<sup>th</sup> year with us, returning in 2016 after a brief absence. As Director of Operations, he oversees everything about South that is not a pastoral concern: scheduling, bookkeeping, office administration, IT, marketing and advertising. His calm and thorough understanding of both people and institutions comforts all of us as we come into contact with him.



This year we have also been the recipient of regular volunteer time in the office, offered by **Janis Castrogiovanni**. Most Tuesday mornings, Janis is at her computer post, entering data, keeping our information on members and contributors up to date or helping Kevin with the bookkeeping. Her tireless hours make managing our many ministries possible. Thank you, Janis!



**ANDY PRATT, MINISTER OF MUSIC**

When not teaching music at Aquinas High School or directing the musical productions at Blackfriar Theater, Andy is musical director of Sing for Joy! and musical worship leader at both Fellowship of Faith and New Life on Monroe. He is also an ordained Ruling Elder in the PC(USA) and was an active part of our former Visioning Team which helped us get where we are today. All of our worship is enhanced by Andy's gifts of music, humor, insight and faith.



**ELDER BARBARA SIXBEY, EVANGELISM COORDINATOR**

Commissioned by the Session to lift up our commitment to evangelism and help all hone our skills at telling the Good News, Barb provides suggestions, challenges, "homework assignments" and occasional preaching to us in the midst of family and professional obligations. We all benefit from her reminders that "God is in charge!"

**REV. DR. JANE SEARJEANT WATT, *PARISH ASSOCIATE***

In the PC(USA), even retired ministers are expected to serve the church in some fashion. A Parish Associate is a retired minister (and in Jane's case, a retired Executive Presbyterian) who serves at the pleasure of the Pastor, with the consent of the Session and the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry. For Jane, her service is in the form of occasional preaching, and attending Session meetings as she is able, providing insight and her experience-based wisdom to the Elders as they tackle situations that many Sessions never face (for example, how to sell a building, liaising with the national church bodies, etc.). What a gift we have been given to have such a resource with us at these times of discernment and developing new ways of being the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!



**ELDER NANCY RICE, *TREASURER***

Elected by the Session each year, the Treasurer oversees our finances and works with the Presbyterian Foundation in coordinating our investments. Nancy's keen eye and practical forward vision keep us on track as she weekly shows up at the office to sign checks, answer (and ask) questions, and keep us looking at our finances through the lens of what it means to be a church and not just a business. The staff and Session are very grateful for her many gifts of time, talent and treasure. (Her report follows in the Finance Section)



## SESSION

South Church and the Acts of Faith Community would not be in existence today, were it not for the faith, commitment and steadfastness of our Session. Unlike other denominations where the Church Council is only responsible for the governance of the church, in the Presbyterian system, the Session is also charged to provide for the spiritual well-being of all church members and the maintenance of authentic worship. That's a tall order in any *traditional* setting, but when coordinating twenty ministries and five worshiping communities in thirteen locations over eight neighborhoods and two suburbs, it can be a daunting task.

At South, the leadership is shared between the Co-Moderators (our pastors) and the Clerk of Session who is elected by the Session members each year. 2019 brought a change in leadership as **Amy Doty**, our Clerk of Session for the last thirteen years, stepped down from her position and became the first ever Clerk Emerita in South's history. Through that designation, the Session has asked Amy to keep her calm, insightful, experienced guidance present to us as we move forward. She has agreed to serve as she is able, and will help to train the new Clerk when one is elected.



Stepping in to fill the gap left by Amy's retirement, **Marirose Dempsey Sansone** agreed to be our transitional Clerk of Session – using her strong organizational skills to ready the way for what could, conceivably, become a shared model of Clerking. We are very grateful that Marirose took on this responsibility, even with her public school teaching and the fact that she and Matt were married this

year. We are sorry to see her term come to an end but continue to love and support her as she enters her own period of personal discernment as to where God is calling her to be.

The Session meets ten times a year. Quarterly, it evaluates each of the AoF's for their Energy & Excitement. When either of those qualities is missing, it is time to reconsider and discern the future for that group since we believe that when the Spirit is present, Energy & Excitement will be hallmarks. This quarterly evaluation keeps our ministry fresh, growing, and responsive to the needs around us.

Amy has been quick to point out that one quality that marks South's Session is the fact that we discuss, question, disagree, explore, but we *listen* to each other and to the Holy Spirit. As a result, most of our decisions are unanimous. Pastor Deb reminds us that when a vote is taken, there are winners and losers. It is much better to invest the time into building consensus that creates unity rather than voting which inserts division and separation.

Our thanks this year to **Carol Curtiss, Amy Doty, Barbara and David Durfee, Sonya Kennedy, Marirose Dempsey Sansone, Barbara Sixbey, Jane Watt, and Pastors Laura and Deb.**

## DEACONS

Our deacons continued to provide care to the entire family of South's Acts of Faith this year. From writing birthday and anniversary cards to delivering meals to those grieving the loss of a loved one, they were often the quiet face of love among our members. Once a month, our deacons made sure the various worshipping communities had the elements needed to celebrate the Lord's Supper and occasionally served communion with the pastors. They made hospital visits and pastoral calls, checked in with members by phone and offered support to those in their worshipping communities on a regular basis.



This year, the deacons spent a great deal of time discussing the best ways to care for our entire congregation now that it covers so many locations and includes many groups populated by people who don't know one another very well. Realizing that the best pastoral care usually takes place in the context of a relationship, we decided to make some changes to how the deacons do their work.

Beginning in 2020, we plan to reduce the size of the deacon team to four and add a new role that we have termed **Partners in Ministry**. The deacons will be assigned to various teams based around the geographic locations of our AoF worshipping communities. Three areas have been identified: Charlotte (Back2Center, Bible and Brew); St. John's Meadows (FoF, CLASS ACT, FFT); and Cobb's Hill (NLoM, Praying Hearts, Food Cupboard, LOL, Milers). [The participants of SouthHeart and Sonray will continue to be cared for in the context of the worship services that take place at RPC and the professional staff there.]

This new configuration will allow the deacons and their Partners in Ministry to develop long lasting relationships with those they see regularly. Rather than trying to minister to people with whom they have no organic connection, now those offering care will encounter a familiar face which will, in turn, provide the context for more meaningful care to be offered and received.



Each deacon will be assisted by Partners in Ministry at the various sites. These partners will assist in identifying and providing for those needing pastoral care, and in supporting the deacon in any other tasks they undertake (such as communion preparation, card writing, etc.) as requested by the deacon.

We imagine that these roles will develop organically based on the needs of the community in question and the particular ministry gifts of the people involved. Deacons will continue to be supported by the Associate Pastor and will in turn support the Partners in Ministry, most of whom have already self-identified for these roles.

We plan to streamline the remaining administrative tasks so that meetings can be kept to a minimum and time can be focused on the work of caring for our community.

As usual with the AoF model, the Deacons remain a work in progress and we look forward to seeing where the Spirit leads us next year.

Our thanks to those who served as Deacons this year, bringing the love and care of Jesus Christ to our entire church: **Sue Bradshaw, Brian Preston, Gordon & Stena Rickner, Carole Utter, Judy Wandtke, and Carleen Wilenius.**

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

As the only committee that reports directly to the congregation as a whole (and not to the Session), our Nominating Committee performs the all-important task of assisting those who feel called to leadership within our church. This year's Nominating Committee was elected at a Special Meeting of the Congregation in the fall and returned a slate of officers that was elected at another Special Meeting on December 22, 2019.

Our thanks to those who served on the NomCom: **Carol Curtiss (chair), Amy Doty, Holly Powell, Frances Ratcliffe, and Stena Rickner.**

Those elected to leadership for 2020 are seen on the following page.



# LEADERSHIP 2020

(x) is the number of their term – first or second three-year term  
 Class is the year their current term is completed  
 \****Bold Italic*** signifies ordination required.

## Session

(session will elect) \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk of Session

### Class of 2020

Carol Curtiss (2)  
 Barb Sixbey (1)

### Class of 2021

Sonya Kennedy (2)  
 John Hust (1)  
 (2-year term)

### Class of 2022

Mary Lee Miller (1)  
 \****Cheryl Steron (1)***

## Deacons

(deacons will elect) \_\_\_\_\_, Chair

### Class of 2020

Stena Rickner (2)

### Class of 2021

Brian Preston (2)  
 Barbara Woodruff (1)

### Class of 2022

Ruth Dempsey (1)

## Corporation Officers

**President** Gordon Rickner

**Secretary** \_\_\_\_\_ **Treasurer** Nancy Rice

Session Elects the Secretary (Clerk of Session, by default)  
 and the Treasurer – both in January when the new  
 Session is seated

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The job of the Personnel Committee is three-fold: Make recommendations to the Session in terms of hiring and employment (this includes annual recommendations related to salaries and continuing our contracts including temporary pastoral relationships); Provide contact people for those who might have concerns about any of the staff and are uncomfortable speaking with either of the pastors about their discomfort; Provide a sounding board for staff who are processing interactions that they need confidential “listening ears” for.

As such, the work of this standing committee is highly confidential and strictly monitored by the Session.

The sincere thanks of South Church goes to our current Personnel Committee members: **Amy Doty, Barbara Durfee, John Hust, Mary Lee Miller, Barb Sixbey, and Sonya Kennedy** who serves as the Chair. Pastors Deb and Laura, as well as Jane Watt (our Parish Associate) are ex-officio members.

## SECTION #4 - PARTNERSHIPS

### IN THIS SECTION:

- PC(USA)
  - Nationally
  - Synod of the Northeast
  - Presbytery of Genesee Valley
- The Center for Youth
- Charlotte Harbortown Homes (High-rise)
- Cobb's Hill Manor
- Pittsford Presbyterian Church
- Rochester Psychiatric Center
- St. John's Meadows
- St. Joseph's House of Hospitality
- Firebird Spirit

All of our Acts of Faith are all about relationships – with God ... with ourselves ... and with others. This groundbreaking work that God is doing through us is made possible through the relationships we have – and are building – with others. Over time, those relationships deepen and both parties are changed as a result of them. We are mindful of how God is working through these partnerships for the betterment of the world as we come together to share the Good News of Inclusive Love, Forgiveness, and the possibilities of New Life. How blessed we are to have worked with these groups of individuals in 2019.

## PC(USA)

At the core of everything we do is the fact that together, we are a church – a faith community – and a proud member of the Presbyterian Church (USA). All of our Acts of Faith, in fact, the entire Acts of Faith Model of Ministry, is a manifestation of our tradition as Presbyterians who are “Reformed, and always reforming.”



It is in the Reformed Tradition that we find our values and our vision, and the religiosity of any particular Act of Faith neither augments nor diminishes the fact that we do what we do *because* we are a church – not *in spite of* being a church.

Presbyterians are “connectional.” That means that while each part of the body has a great deal of autonomy over its identity (and as a denomination, we represent great diversity), we choose to be connected to the other parts of the whole. We all work together, and we recognize the graduated authority of the next highest body (what we call the judicatories) over us. Churches come together to form a Presbytery, for example, and in some things, the Presbytery holds authority over the church. The same is true for Presbyteries, Synods, and the national General Assembly.

During the last year – and for several years leading up to now – South Church has had contact with all three levels of judicatories – and we are the better for it. Hopefully, so are the judicatories as our questions, vision, and actions continue to influence the larger denomination.

We are grateful to each for the support of their leadership, as well as their financial opportunities through grants and scholarships.

## NATIONALLY

The visit from Ray Jones (see Section 2 of this report), representing the **Presbyterian Mission Agency** is the most recent example of our ongoing partnership with the national church – but so, too, are the articles which appear in national publications of the denomination.

In addition to Ray’s visit, we also benefit from visits (like last April) from Paul Grier, one of the Vice-Presidents of the **Presbyterian Foundation** where we have invested the money from the sale of both the South Church and New Life Church campuses. Paul is ever-ready to provide us with guidance, opinion, and observations of national trends. He has played a significant role in the development of Firebird Spirit and our focal points for the future.



Two of our AoF's (Back2Center and Fellowship of Faith) are part of the national **1001 New Worshiping Communities** initiative and, as such, have received seed money from the national church. In 2020, we will be applying for additional funding for Fellowship of Faith – an Investment Grant as we continue to grow and evolve – and we will be seeking recognition and seed money for New Life on Monroe.

Additionally, South Presbyterian is now a member of the **Matthew 25 Initiative** which is just starting to unfold across the country. It remains to be seen what role we might end up serving in that movement through our extensive work with the poor, homeless and those living with mental illness.

## SYNOD OF THE NORTHEAST



Last spring and summer, members of our staff met with **Rev. Dr. Harold Delhagen, the Synod Executive** for the Synod of the Northeast. The Synod includes 22 Presbyteries (over 1,100 diverse rural, suburban, and urban congregations). Three years ago, they financially supported the initial developmental stages of Firebird Spirit through a \$34,000 Innovation Grant to assess the possibility of shared office services by smaller churches.

Now, they are very interested in helping other churches and Presbyteries pay for the services of Firebird Spirit, but in addition, we are in conversation with the larger church about the development of a new pilot program in Community Chaplain Missionary.

## PRESBYTERY OF GENESEE VALLEY

The Genesee Valley Presbytery (GVP) is our home.

Through the work of both our Presbytery Leader, the **Rev. Amy Williams Fowler**, and our Stated Clerk, **Susan Orr**, we continue to pioneer the AoF Model with the support of our colleagues and sister churches. As Amy is fond of saying (and making groups repeat through call and response 😊) “There are many ways to be the church in the Presbytery of Genesee Valley.”



Aside from the obvious ways to connect with the Presbytery – through **Committee on Ministry** and the **Trustees** – South is involved with Presbytery leadership through committees, task forces, and more. It's not just the pastors who serve on these committees. In the last few years, **Amy Doty, Nancy Rice, Barb Sixbey, and Sue Tedesco** – all active South Presbyterian members – have served in various capacities, making a difference in the work and the thinking of others.

As a result of these relationships, South is frequently lifted up for our daring, our praying, and our faith. Equally important, however, we are lifted up in prayer by others, and when our friends came from Los Angeles to film their short documentaries about us, Amy Fowler not only engaged them over dinner, answering their many questions about how Presbyteries and churches can work together to bring

change to the denomination, but she sat for a one-hour interview on film (part of which can be seen on our website at <https://southpc.org/welcome/>).

Special thanks this year goes to our COM liaison, **Elder Bill Mackie** of the Downtown Presbyterian Church who has been on the journey with us for the last six years. These have been years of real transition and growth and we are grateful to Bill – who will complete his service in 2020 – for his caring and steadfast presence with us, providing insight and friendship along the way.

## THE CENTER FOR YOUTH

In 2019, South formed a relationship with The Center for Youth in Rochester. It was the first time that CFY had done an extended program with a faith community and they were very generous, giving us a 50% scholarship. Two Wednesdays a month when the Milers were not running, our **LOL Youth Group** and their advisors met at The Center for Youth on Monroe Avenue to learn and develop skills related to conflict transformation, self-expression and anger management. Because this happened during the dinner hour, it was our responsibility to feed the teens as well. Several Acts of Faith and individuals contributed to provide the meals necessary for our kids. The program concluded in the fall, but the lessons learned by the youth – and the resources garnered by the advisors – will be remembered for years to come.



## CHARLOTTE HARBORTOWN HOMES (HIGH-RISE)

For the last four years, Charlotte Harbortown high-rise has been the venue for our Thursday night Act of Faith, **Back2Center**. This year, the Monday **Bible & Brew** group also began meeting there. In both cases, it is the Movie Room that hosts our ministries which are open to all residents. We are grateful to the management of Harbortown Homes for their welcoming spirit and generosity in providing free space for these gatherings to occur.

## COBB'S HILL MANOR

Cobb's Hill Manor, though a relatively new entity in the Rochester area, has proven to be a stalwart partner of South. Every Sunday, they allow us to lead worship there through **New Life on Monroe**, and to store our equipment nearby. More recently, they have worked with us to provide space for the first Memorial Service of one of our attendees there, and they accommodate our new Act of Faith, **Praying Hearts** once a month. As our relationship continues to grow, more and more residents are learning about us. We are thankful for the relationship we enjoy with these caregivers.



## PITTSFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For the last several years, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford has been a support of South and our many ministries. Now, focusing primarily on our work with the Rochester Psychiatric Center, Pittsford Pres is a main supporter of both **SouthHeart** and **Sonray Fellowships**.



Additionally, they generously donated their Fellowship Hall and kitchen to us for our Summer Retreat.

## ROCHESTER PSYCHIATRIC

### CENTER (RPC)

What began almost a decade ago as a means for those patients nearing discharge to have some familiar places and faces in the community has now grown into two thriving worshipping communities. The **SouthHeart** and **Sonray Fellowships**' (see Section 1) schedules mean that volunteers from South Church – and our friends who, through us have come to volunteer there as well – are on the RPC campus four weeks a month.



Whether we are leading worship in the Chapel or on a floor of the Regional Forensic Unit, we are shepherded in our work by **Sister Elaine Hollis**, a Sister of St. Joseph who serves as our liaison. Her compassion, commitment and calling help to ground us – especially when we de-brief after a visit.

Special thanks is also extended to **Phil Griffin**, the Executive Director of RPC, for his support of our ministries there. Phil is always willing to offer a grateful word to us and to recognize the important role that spirituality plays in patients' long-term well-being and health.

To the best of anyone's knowledge, South is the first faith-based group in the New York State to create worshipping communities with volunteers, patients and staff at any of the facilities overseen by the **NYS Office of Mental Health**. None of that would have happened without the support of Phil and Sr. Elaine.

## ST. JOHN'S MEADOWS

Once a year, South leaders meet with **Paul Bartlett**, Vice-President of Administration and Senior Housing at St. John's Meadows and Brickstone. This year was no exception. As Pastors Laura and Deb sat with Paul and **Jan Kennedy**, Spiritual Life Chaplain for the Meadows, reviewing our relationship over the last five years, we were all shocked at how quickly the time had flown.

The Meadows provides space for three of our Acts of Faith: **Fellowship of Faith** on Sunday, **CLASS ACT** on Tuesday, and **Sing for Joy!** on Wednesday. This space is made available to us at no cost! And in addition, we have two storage areas – one for the communion table and paraments, the other for the red cart and a safe where our offering is stored every week.



The relationship that has grown over the last five years bespeaks our mutual respect and joint commitment to do whatever we can to enrich the lives of Meadows residents. Special thanks goes to **Rev. Sarah Greenfield Culp**, the team coordinator for Spiritual Life Services for all of the St. John's properties. Through her work with **Holly Powell** (coordinator for Recreational Therapists at St. John's, and an Affiliate Member of South), we were also able to have St. John's Home become the anchor for our Monroe Milers during their spring and fall seasons.

At Sarah's suggestion, she, Holly, and Pastor Deb have applied for – and been accepted – to give a presentation at a national conference for people who work with senior communities next August. ***Partnering in Beloved Community: Birthing a New Culture*** will share what South and St. John's have done by working together, in the hopes that other churches, nationwide, may look at their local options for a similar partnership with a senior living community in their area.

## ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

St. Joe's House was established in 1941 as part of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement. Today, 203 Catholic Worker communities remain committed to nonviolence, hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken, and protesting injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms (<https://www.catholicworker.org/>).



So far, our Matthew 25 AoF involves providing hospitality to the guests on Tuesday mornings and one Sunday afternoon a month, and staffing the emergency shelter every Monday night during the winter season. We also support the organizing efforts led by the Workers at St. Joe's in partnership with the Citywide Tenants Union and the Homeless Union. By the end of the year, we were being approached by other churches around the Presbytery to secure locations for them to do mission work. We have just begun exploring the many ways that we might work together in the Kingdom of God, and we look forward to watching God's work unfold through our combined efforts.

## FIREBIRD SPIRIT



Of all of our relationships, it is that with Firebird Spirit (see Section 1) that promises to be our closest ongoing partnership. Please pray for our leaders' discernment as this relationship grows in the year ahead, and extend your prayers to include the many churches and Presbyteries who are struggling to discern God's plan for them in the future. We pray that what we have experienced might be a resource for them on their journey. As is printed at the bottom of the Firebird stationery:

---

*Transforming Churches by*

**Assessing needs | Defining gifts | Discerning the Path**

Firebird Spirit is an Act of Faith of South Presbyterian Church and a registered charity in New York State.  
501(c)3 status is pending.



## SECTION #5 - FINANCES

### IN THIS SECTION:

- Admin Report from the Director of Operations
- Treasurer's Report and Reflections
- End-of-the-Year Financial Statement

## ADMIN REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

2019 was a very busy year for administration and bookkeeping support, with several major projects started at the beginning of the year. With the departure of the former bookkeeper at the beginning of the year, Session approved the conversion of three essential functions of church operations: bookkeeping, payroll, and member giving.

Additionally, we had already started the process of changing the website over to a new server platform at the end of 2018. The work on the website continued through many months of 2019. Lastly, Firebird Spirit required a lot of attention as we first registered the business with the state, then worked with our attorney to incorporate, then completed the non-profit application for federal tax-exempt status. All those tasks required many, many hours integrated into the normal weekly production schedule throughout the year.

The individual Acts of Faith experienced some change throughout the year as well. Some grew, some rescheduled, some were added, some were paused. All interacted with the office and/or finance functions at some point during the year. Monroe Milers, Mount Hope World Singers and the Youth group all required significant administrative resources, all while maintaining the weekly support of 4 worship services and various special events, meetings, visitors and Firebird Spirit planning activities.

### **2019 Projects:**

#### **QuickBooks:**

Much gratitude and thanks go to Janis Castrogiovanni for her many hours of time and the talents she brings to South Church and all the Acts of Faith. With her help, we were able to covert our old bookkeeping system to a modern platform which accommodates 5 users and affords remote access from any computer. We are actively working to eliminate the need for any business function to be tied to a specific user/computer/office and QuickBooks Online is one step toward that goal.

#### **Tithe.ly:**

Another step away from computer/office bound functions also requires a big round of applause for Janis Castrogiovanni and her love of database work. After we implemented the new church management system, Janis was able to import all members and contacts very quickly. She then spent many weeks perfecting the functions South Church needs to manage memberships, pledges and giving statements as well as organizing people into many groups for communications with our many, many, MANY Acts of Faith communities. It may seem like an extravagant system from the perspective of an individual Act of Faith... but when you consider that South Church interacted with almost 6000 people in 2019 and gifts of support come from far more people and organizations than just members in Sunday worship... you begin to see the need for our robust management system.

**Payroll:**

We converted to a new payroll provider in February. This required focused attention to ensure all the pieces of employee compensation continued without interruption during the transition. It actually required several cycles to work out all the details. In the end, we were able to reduce our payroll costs from ~\$6000 down to \$1200 per year, plus whatever time I spend on payroll tasks each period.

**Website conversion:**

It was decided in 2018 that we needed to host our own website to ensure flexibility, integrate online giving, and provide a platform for future offerings through Firebird Spirit. We were able to cut our costs in half while also gaining unlimited support for multiple websites, i.e.: [firebirdspirit.org](http://firebirdspirit.org), [actsoffaith.org](http://actsoffaith.org) and any other future client of Firebird Spirit. The South Church website has proven to be the main point of contact for many new visitors, ministry/outreach opportunities and donations.

**Firebird Spirit, Inc:**

A great deal of time was spent on the legal formation of Firebird Spirit, which was incorporated July 8, 2019. While Deb worked on the massive amounts of narrative detail, I worked on the financial forecasts, and the IRS Form 1023 for non-profit status. This required quite a lot of back and forth with the attorney, and resulted in some delays, but was finally filed December 5, 2019. In the Fall, we completed two major book mailings to all the Presbyteries within our Synod, and then to all the churches in our Presbytery. We have received some inquiries and expect new conversations and relations to develop throughout 2020.



**South Presbyterian Church**  
**Budget vs. Actuals: 2019 Budget with Fund Carryovers - FY19 P&L Classes**  
**January - December 2019**

	Total			
	Actual	Budget	Remaining	% of Budget
<b>Income</b>				
4100 Per Capita Contributions	841.00	650.00	-191.00	129.38%
4200 Worship Collections			0.00	
4210 Pledge Income	60,253.00	60,172.00	-81.00	100.13%
4220 Pledgers' Additional Giving	1,449.00		-1,449.00	
4230 Non-Pledgers & Misc	12,597.49	6,500.00	-6,097.49	193.81%
<b>Total 4200 Worship Collections</b>	<b>\$ 74,299.49</b>	<b>\$ 66,672.00</b>	<b>-\$ 7,627.49</b>	<b>111.44%</b>
4300 Earned Income			0.00	
4310 Office Services		4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00%
4320 Consulting	4,038.60	3,000.00	-1,038.60	134.62%
4330 Registration Income	1,246.21		-1,246.21	
4340 Door/Ticket Receipts	662.00		-662.00	
4350 Advertising	400.00		-400.00	
4360 Publications	542.00	500.00	-42.00	108.40%
4370 NYS Reimbursements	2,587.50	4,000.00	1,412.50	64.69%
<b>Total 4300 Earned Income</b>	<b>\$ 9,476.31</b>	<b>\$ 11,500.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,023.69</b>	<b>82.40%</b>
4400 Support			0.00	
4410 Individual Donations	6,080.00		-6,080.00	
4420 Foundation Grants	8,665.00		-8,665.00	
4430 Mission Support	2,250.00	3,000.00	750.00	75.00%
4440 GV Presbytery Grants		7,500.00	7,500.00	0.00%
4470 NLPC Legacy Operating Support	75,000.00		-75,000.00	
4480 Transfer from Fund	22,558.19	22,558.00	-0.19	100.00%
4490 SPC Support to Acts of Faith	12,700.00	12,700.00	0.00	100.00%
<b>Total 4400 Support</b>	<b>\$ 127,253.19</b>	<b>\$ 45,758.00</b>	<b>-\$ 81,495.19</b>	<b>278.10%</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 211,869.99</b>	<b>\$ 124,580.00</b>	<b>-\$ 87,289.99</b>	<b>170.07%</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$ 211,869.99</b>	<b>\$ 124,580.00</b>	<b>-\$ 87,289.99</b>	<b>170.07%</b>



## Expenses

<b>5100 Pastor</b>				0.00	
5110 Cash Salary, Pastor	31,977.86	90,037.00	58,059.14	35.52%	
5120 Housing, Pastor	23,003.28		-23,003.28		
5130 Utilities, Pastor	70.99		-70.99		
5140 SECA, Pastor	3,765.80		-3,765.80		
5150 Board of Pensions, Pastor	22,363.04		-22,363.04		
5160 Professional & Travel Expenses, Pastor	9,444.05		-9,444.05		
5170 Continuing Education, Pastor	1,058.86		-1,058.86		
<b>Total 5100 Pastor</b>	<b>\$ 91,683.88</b>	<b>\$ 90,037.00</b>	<b>-\$ 1,646.88</b>	<b>101.83%</b>	
<b>5200 Associate Pastor</b>				0.00	
5210 Cash Salary, Associate Pastor	26,946.52	57,112.00	30,165.48	47.18%	
5220 Housing, Associate Pastor	13,999.96		-13,999.96		
5240 SECA, Associate Pastor	1,980.03		-1,980.03		
5250 Board of Pensions, Associate Pastor	10,305.42		-10,305.42		
5260 Professional & Travel Expenses, Associate Pastor	2,694.01		-2,694.01		
5270 Continuing Education, Associate Pastor	300.00		-300.00		
<b>Total 5200 Associate Pastor</b>	<b>\$ 56,225.94</b>	<b>\$ 57,112.00</b>	<b>\$ 886.06</b>	<b>98.45%</b>	
<b>5300 Employees</b>				0.00	
5310 Wages, Minister of Music	20,675.78	20,400.00	-275.78	101.35%	
5320 Wages, Administration	54,033.49	53,040.00	-993.49	101.87%	
<b>Total 5300 Employees</b>	<b>\$ 74,709.27</b>	<b>\$ 73,440.00</b>	<b>-\$ 1,269.27</b>	<b>101.73%</b>	
<b>5400 Employer Expenses</b>				0.00	
5410 Payroll Taxes	7,671.85	5,620.00	-2,051.85	136.51%	
5420 Worker's Compensation/Disability	2,162.69	1,400.00	-762.69	154.48%	
5430 Staff/Volunteer/Leadership Appreciation	470.26	500.00	29.74	94.05%	
<b>Total 5400 Employer Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 10,304.80</b>	<b>\$ 7,520.00</b>	<b>-\$ 2,784.80</b>	<b>137.03%</b>	
<b>5500 Professional Services</b>				0.00	
5510 Pulpit Supply	150.00	600.00	450.00	25.00%	
5520 Music Supply	1,000.00	750.00	-250.00	133.33%	
5530 Accounting		1,100.00	1,100.00	0.00%	
5540 Legal Fees	2,178.65	2,500.00	321.35	87.15%	
5550 Independent Contractors	9,614.01	5,200.00	-4,414.01	184.88%	
5560 Contracted Services	816.00	1,000.00	184.00	81.60%	
<b>Total 5500 Professional Services</b>	<b>\$ 13,758.66</b>	<b>\$ 11,150.00</b>	<b>-\$ 2,608.66</b>	<b>123.40%</b>	
<b>5600 PCUSA &amp; Mission</b>				0.00	
5610 Per Capita	1,144.10	1,144.00	-0.10	100.01%	
5620 PCUSA Mission Pledge	1,100.00	1,100.00	0.00	100.00%	
<b>Total 5600 PCUSA &amp; Mission</b>	<b>\$ 2,244.10</b>	<b>\$ 2,244.00</b>	<b>-\$ 0.10</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

<b>5700 Facilities</b>			0.00	
<b>5710 Insurance</b>	743.00	800.00	57.00	92.88%
<b>5720 Office Rent</b>	17,760.00	17,760.00	0.00	100.00%
<b>5730 Telephone/VOIP</b>	50.00	60.00	10.00	83.33%
<b>5740 Venue Rentals/Donations</b>	2,556.50	3,495.00	938.50	73.15%
<b>Total 5700 Facilities</b>	<b>\$ 21,109.50</b>	<b>\$ 22,115.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,005.50</b>	<b>95.45%</b>
<b>5800 General Church Expenses</b>			0.00	
<b>5802 Office Supplies</b>	1,099.02	1,850.00	750.98	59.41%
<b>5804 Copier Lease</b>	1,949.71	2,150.00	200.29	90.68%
<b>5806 Copier Usage</b>	2,344.34	2,850.00	505.66	82.26%
<b>5808 Postage</b>	683.35	250.00	-433.35	273.34%
<b>5810 Computers/Technology</b>	3,789.55	1,000.00	-2,789.55	378.96%
<b>5812 Internet Service</b>	1,019.88	1,020.00	0.12	99.99%
<b>5814 Web Presence</b>	680.17	750.00	69.83	90.69%
<b>5816 Publicity/Advertising/Marketing</b>	449.43	300.00	-149.43	149.81%
<b>5818 Printing</b>	2,555.46		-2,555.46	
<b>5820 Instrument Repair &amp; Tuning</b>		200.00	200.00	0.00%
<b>5822 Music Supplies</b>	1,742.91	200.00	-1,542.91	871.46%
<b>5824 Worship Supplies</b>	1,166.28	500.00	-666.28	233.26%
<b>5826 Hospitality</b>	4,779.64	4,170.00	-609.64	114.62%
<b>5834 Subscriptions</b>	55.85		-55.85	
<b>5836 Admissions/Field Trips</b>	657.00	1,800.00	1,143.00	36.50%
<b>5838 Transportation</b>	316.80	100.00	-216.80	316.80%
<b>5840 Other Event Expense</b>	1,007.78	800.00	-207.78	125.97%
<b>5842 Memberships/Dues Expense</b>	483.60	400.00	-83.60	120.90%
<b>5844 Other Acts of Faith Expense</b>	17,311.77	19,100.00	1,788.23	90.64%
<b>5848 Bank/Monetary Fees</b>	471.98		-471.98	
<b>5850 Miscellaneous Expense</b>	1,485.67		-1,485.67	
<b>5852 Transfer to Fund</b>	32,909.55	12,308.00	-20,601.55	267.38%
<b>5854 SPC Support to Acts of Faith</b>	12,700.00	12,700.00	0.00	100.00%
<b>Total 5800 General Church Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 89,659.74</b>	<b>\$ 62,448.00</b>	<b>-\$ 27,211.74</b>	<b>143.58%</b>
<b>Unapplied Cash Bill Payment Expense</b>	494.62		-494.62	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 360,190.51</b>	<b>\$ 326,066.00</b>	<b>-\$ 34,124.51</b>	<b>110.47%</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>-\$ 148,320.52</b>	<b>-\$ 201,486.00</b>	<b>-\$ 53,165.48</b>	<b>73.61%</b>
<b>Other Income</b>				
<b>4500 Other Income</b>			0.00	
<b>4510 Interest Income Earned</b>	0.27	100.00	99.73	0.27%
<b>4520 Gain (Loss) on Investments</b>	37,412.60		-37,412.60	
<b>Total 4500 Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 37,412.87</b>	<b>\$ 100.00</b>	<b>-\$ 37,312.87</b>	<b>37412.87%</b>
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 37,412.87</b>	<b>\$ 100.00</b>	<b>-\$ 7,312.87</b>	<b>37412.87%</b>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 37,412.87</b>	<b>\$ 100.00</b>	<b>-\$ 37,312.87</b>	<b>37412.87%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$ 110,907.65</b>	<b>-\$ 201,386.00</b>	<b>-\$ 90,478.35</b>	<b>55.07%</b>

# South Presbyterian Church

## Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2019

	<u>Total</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Bank Accounts</b>	
1110 Checking, CNB	13,453.95
1120 Petty Cash	6.00
1130 Checking, Advantage FCU	0.00
1140 Savings, Advantage FCU	0.00
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$ 13,459.95</b>
<b>Other Current Assets</b>	
1310 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Income	80,700.55
1320 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Growth	90,838.58
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 171,539.13</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 184,999.08</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 184,999.08</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>	
2110 Payroll Taxes Payable	
2120 Federal Withholding	1,544.00
2130 Social Security	686.76
2140 Medicare	160.60
2150 State/Local Income Tax Payable	334.04
<b>Total 2110 Payroll Taxes Payable</b>	<b>\$ 2,725.40</b>
2400 Pass Through Funds	0.00
2500 Pass Through Offerings	
2510 One Great Hour of Sharing	0.00
2520 Peacemaking	0.00
2530 Christmas Joy	381.00
2540 Disaster Relief	50.00
<b>Total 2500 Pass Through Offerings</b>	<b>\$ 431.00</b>
2600 Prepaid Pledges	2,200.00

2710 HRA Withholdings	
2720 HRA - Deb Swift	0.00
Total 2710 HRA Withholdings	<b>\$ 0.00</b>
Total Other Current Liabilities	<b>\$ 5,356.40</b>
Total Current Liabilities	<b>\$ 5,356.40</b>
Long-Term Liabilities	
2800 Grants, General	
2810 Genesee Valley Presbytery Grant Fund	650.00
Total 2800 Grants, General	<b>\$ 650.00</b>
2850 Acts of Faith Funds	
2860 Youth LOL Fund	3,938.53
2870 New Life Food Cupboard Fund	10,837.14
2880 Monroe Milers Fund	13,950.58
2890 Mt. Hope World Singers Fund	4,183.30
Total 2850 Acts of Faith Funds	<b>\$ 32,909.55</b>
2910 New Life Neighborhood Legacy Fund	4,279.20
2920 New Life PC Fund	83,284.77
2930 Elliot Fund	276.78
2940 Christian Education Fund	1,354.30
2950 Memorial Fund	5,824.69
2960 Hope Fund	2,498.61
Total Long-Term Liabilities	<b>\$ 131,077.90</b>
Total Liabilities	<b>\$ 136,434.30</b>
Equity	
3100 Opening Balance Equity	159,472.43
3200 Retained Earnings	
Net Income	-110,907.65
Total Equity	<b>\$ 48,564.78</b>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	<b>\$ 184,999.08</b>



# LOOKING AHEAD ...

## In these uncertain days ...

*“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” – Isaiah 41:10*

Whether we are looking at the world, our country, our church, or – for some of us – our health and family, these can be uncertain days.

**In terms of South Church ...** we should remember that when we sold our building in 2014, we said that we would be able to live for 7 years off the sale of that building, but that we would continue to be robust in our ministries while attempting to discern (and then follow) where God was leading us. Then, when New Life Presbyterian dissolved, sold their building and joined our Acts of Faith Community, we were able to extend our outreach and our continuation a bit.

Now, just look at how many people our “merry little band of believers” is reaching (see pp. 5-6). Our official membership is up to just under 60, yet almost 6,000 (5,926) different people have been a part of one of our Acts of Faith at least once during the year, and our ministries have touched the lives of others over 25,000 times (25,399 is the exact estimate).

**Churches straddle two worlds ...** the KOG (the Kingdom or Kin-dom of God), and the contextual world in which we live. For instance, our context as a 21<sup>st</sup> century church in one of the richest countries in the world, but one where, “according to a 2018 survey, **28 percent of Americans never attend church or synagogue**, compared to **22 percent of Americans who attend every week**”

(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/245491/church-attendance-of-americans/>). Our context is very different from an underdeveloped country where faith communities represent the primary organizing force in the community.

The numbers above speak to the work that we are doing in the KOG, sharing the Good News that people are loved by a God who will not leave them, and that the teachings of Jesus Christ outline for us the way to be in perfect relationship with that God.

However, the practical realities of our ministries in this cultural context in this day and age underscore the challenge of financially supporting what we do.

**For the last three years ...** we have been working to develop a way of stabilizing our finances.

Given the choice between scaling back to the bare minimum of ministries and thereby extending our life or stepping out in faith to follow Jesus, knowing that we are operating with a finite amount of money, we have continually chosen the latter. Every year that decision is revisited by our Session who continues to rely on God’s Grace for solutions to our everyday challenges.

**We don’t know what the future will bring, but God does. God’s in charge.**

As our Treasurer and financial reports underscore, we are coming to the end of our savings. If nothing changes, we will run out of money by mid-2021.

However, we are NOT “doing nothing.”

The Session has a plan for moving forward if we are not successful in bringing in the additional funds needed to continue beyond that point. Most of our ministries can continue with little income, but some of them need pastoral leadership – which is our biggest expense.

Every dollar that Firebird Spirit brings in is a dollar we do NOT have to take out of our investments to continue the work that we are doing, and a dollar that extends us farther into the future.

And a big part of our strategy for 2020 is to seek funding for a **Community Missionary Chaplain** position that we have developed. So many of our ministries are with populations that will never be able to support a pastoral presence. (Frankly, this is true for many urban centers across the country.)

As a result, we are creating this kind of position – it already exists with us, actually – and it will cover much of the work that Pastor Laura does with our marginalized populations (Back2Center, Bible & Brew, LOL Youth Group, New Life on Monroe, New Life Food Cupboard, Matthew 25, Praying Hearts, SouthHeart, Sonray). In 2020, we will be talking with the denomination about recognizing and funding this kind of approach to ministry.

We welcome your prayers for all of these things, and for the Session, Pastors, and Office Administration who are spearheading these efforts.

God is doing something amazing here.

We truly believe that by earnestly praying ***Put us where you want us, and Show us what to do***, we will be put in the right place and equipped with everything that we need in order to fulfill God’s Plan.

Some days it’s hard and more nerve-wracking than others.

But the good news is that we’ve all been here before. We know how to navigate challenges and not lose hope ... not lose faith ... and not lose track of what’s really important.

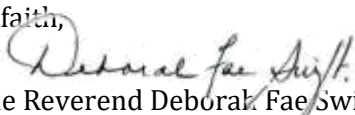
We are here to support each other and to keep on keeping on.

Every time I begin to question what we are doing or how we are doing it, I am reminded of Philippians 4:6-7:

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

To God be the glory for writing this story!

In faith,

  
The Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, Pastor of South Presbyterian Church  
Executive Director, Firebird Spirit, Inc.

January 1, 2020