

# BALANCE

A Report on our Ministry & Mission during 2020



## The 2021 Yearbook

SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN



*an Acts of Faith Community*

- "The Church has Left the Building" -

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# Welcome

WHAT A YEAR ...

Unforgettable. Challenging. Creative. Inspiring. Defining.

It will take decades for historians to write any definitive account of all that happened this year. Like so many people, we can divide 2020 into the pre-COVID time (January 1 – March 15) and the intra-COVID time (March 16 – December 31).

The shut-down came virtually without warning. It caught us all off guard. I remember calling people to say that we wouldn't be worshiping on Sunday. Little did we know in those first few days that a year later we still would not have returned to our regular routines of gathering in person.



The Session's and my first concern: providing for the worship of the people.

Unlike so many other churches, the transitions brought about by the pandemic were pretty quickly absorbed by us at South because we were already "out in the community" with our Acts of Faith. We didn't have our own worship space so we were spared the agonizing decisions of whether or not to hold in-person gatherings, but the loss to all of us of not having those weekly times to check in, laugh together, give and receive hugs, and share the music, prayer and scriptural moments loomed large as the days drew on.

Instead, our choices were whether to hold worship online, either live (through Zoom or FaceBook Live), or create a video of the worship. The advantage of live worship, of course, is that everyone is present and worshiping at the same time. But FaceBook Live can only be broadcast from one location, so in order for us to do that, we would have needed a centralized place for Laura, Andy and me to broadcast from. That wasn't practical.

A Zoom service would be limiting for us because our only music would be Andy singing and playing. We wouldn't have bulletins available for everyone, and couldn't put text on the screen, so responsive readings would be out.

The decision was clear: we would do video worship, stored online on our YouTube Channel (South Church Rochester). It would include all of the regular parts of a worship service; songs would be on the screen while Andy sang and played; responsive readings would be possible; we could focus on the content of worship and find comfort and solace through our time together. Besides, online video would allow us to "worship" any day, at any time, and as frequently as we wanted.

But South Church believes that every single one of our Acts of Faith (AoF's) is a form of "worship." So how could we keep them going? And was there need for other AoF's to meet the *new* needs of our community in light of COVID?

As your pastors, Laura and I were committed to providing enough avenues of contact throughout the week so that we would each have some anchors. This was going to be a disorienting time. Our Acts of Faith would provide us with reference points in our week; our connections to church are often how we track the rhythm of the week. How could we create a new COVID-structure for each of us to "hang our hat on?"

This *Yearbook* will look different from what you have seen before; accumulating pictures that adequately reflect our collective experience has been a challenge. But we are still here – caring for each other, sharing life with each other, and finding ways to connect despite physical distance as we live in the Light of God.

- Our in-person ministry has continued in select, sequestered locations and has actually expanded through new AoF's this year.
- Our Elders have risen to the occasion and a new cadre of worship leaders has emerged.
- We may not have a Sign Brigade to direct people to our worship space, but we have volunteers who deliver DVD's around the city so that folks can worship with us in their own homes and at their own time.
- We have maintained communication with our various location hosts – St. John's Meadows, the Rochester Psychiatric Center, Cobbs Hill Manor, Temple Beth Shalom, Mt. Hope Diner, and added a couple of new location partners (Wesley Gardens and St. John's Home) – and all are excitedly awaiting the time when we can renew our on-site presence.

During this year, God has reached out through us to people around the country. Folks from **Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, Kentucky, Ohio and Utah** have all thanked us for our worship services or Prayerful Pauses. Some have sent financial support for those through our website. Within New York State, we have regular members and viewers from Albany, the mid-Hudson area, and Ithaca. God is using us to let people know they are not alone and that God loves them.

The biggest challenge for all of us has been finding and keeping our balance during these shifting times. This year's Yearbook (i.e. this Annual Report) honors that commitment to balance and all those who helped us to keep it as we look back at 2020 and prepare for 2021.

Throughout it all, as you will see, through moving our office location (the weekend of the shut-down in March), saying goodbye to Pastor Laura, grieving the loss of members, and more, God has been with us. We have maintained our witness of faith, and we have all learned first-hand what it is to pray our "dangerous prayer" in the midst of a global pandemic:

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

But here we are ... celebrating another year ... looking ahead and wondering what God has in store for us next ... lifting each other in prayer and joyous praise of the One who travels with us.

Come and see what God has done ... just by a few people earnestly praying and saying YES! to God.



*Pastor Deb*

The Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, *Pastor*  
02-12-21 | ROCHESTER, NY

Special thanks to the following for their contributions to this report. They are some of the ones who keep us all in balance: Janis Castrogiovanni, Barbara Durfee, Kevin Fuller, Andy Pratt, Nancy Rice, Carol Santos, and Barbara Woodruff.



## Change in Pastoral Staff

As if dealing with the pandemic weren't enough of a challenge, South also experienced change in our pastoral staff this year.

The Reverend Laura Bachmann first joined us as a seminary intern, and then returned to help us when our previous Associate Pastor left on medical leave. She was called as our Associate Pastor in 2019 and ordained accordingly. This year, she left to assume the solo pastorate of Gates Presbyterian Church, also in our Presbytery.

The position of Associate Pastor was always expected to be a temporary one, allowing Pastor Deb to focus on ways of stabilizing our new model of ministry, but decreasing revenue hurried the process along. And so, mid-way through the year, we bid goodbye to Pastor Laura who had truly become woven into the fabric of our being at South. Below is part of the virtual farewell held online through Zoom on July 17, 2020 (see picture on page 12). It was coordinated by Elder Barbara Durfee who wrote the following.



In celebration of Pastor Laura Bachmann's year and a half ministry with us in her role as Associate Pastor at South Presbyterian, we offered our farewell in the tradition of New Life on Monroe by sharing "Bread for the Journey" via a Zoom gathering (with home-baked bread delivered to her home).

"Pastor Laura, we share this "Bread for the Journey" as a symbol of God's loving presence and nourishment for you and your family together with our heartfelt gratitude as you journey on to your new calling with Gates Presbyterian Church.

As we reach out and wrap our arms around you, Pastor Laura, in a virtual hug, we offer this *"Sending Forth Prayer"* ...

*We thank you, gracious God, for Pastor Laura and her many gifts humbly shared with us. We give thanks for her compassionate presence that eased yet another transition for our New Life on Monroe community gathered at Cobb's Hill Manor.*

*We thank You for her genuine heart poised to listen deeply and then help us reflect on Your Spirit's moving in the moment with words of both comfort and challenge. We are grateful for how Pastor Laura's inviting warmth encouraged us to be in conversation with Your Word and each other during worship. Our weekly time together enabled us to share Your love and light within our growing New Life on Monroe community, and to step out in the spaces beyond where you are calling us to be Your presence.*

*We give thanks for her dedication to living Your call for restorative justice in mending conflicts with care and grace, always assuring us of Your abiding presence. We gratefully celebrate all the ways she has inspired us to follow Your call to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with You, our God.*

*Loving God, today we ask that Pastor Laura know the depth of our gratitude for her gifts shared with us. May she feel the assurance of our continuing prayers for her in her new calling. And may she leave this place today knowing she is always welcome among us.*

*In the name of the One who guides us on our way, we pray. Amen"*



# Acts of Faith . . .

A year ago at the end of 2019, we had 19 Acts of Faith. Some have concluded, five were added this year and four of those continue.

## Worship in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Worship has always been at the core of who we are as a church. In the AoF Model, everything can be considered worship, so for this portion of our report, we will focus on those AoF's where there is scripture, music, prayer and reflection to delineate our ongoing worship presence as traditionalists would define it.

In mid-March, four of our five worshipping Acts of Faith were blissfully going on their merry old ways (Back2Center, the fifth one, will be addressed below):

- On Sundays, **NEW LIFE ON MONROE** and **FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH** welcomed 60 – 70 people a week at Cobbs Hill Manor and St. John's Meadows, respectively.
- The first and third Thursdays, **SONRAY FELLOWSHIP** brought volunteers together from South and Faith Temple to lead worship in the Regional Forensic Unit of the Rochester Psychiatric Center where an average of 28 people would gather to share the Word, sing, pray, and engage in fellowship time.
- The second and fourth Wednesdays, **SOUTHEART FELLOWSHIP** saw volunteers from South, Faith Temple and (occasionally) Community of the Savior descend upon the chapel at Rochester Psychiatric Center with their civil patient population. Conversational worship with singing, prayer and scripture proved to be both theologically meaningful and spiritually inspiring. Attendance ranged from 8-18, but several of the faithful were long-term worshipers with us.

So with the onset of the pandemic, the challenge was clear:

### *How can we still worship together, though apart?*

As noted in Rev. Swift's "Welcome" at the beginning of this report, the decision was made to use video as our primary worship medium. However, it was quickly realized that none of the institutions where we were meeting were allowing people to come together in groups to watch the videos.

At the Meadows, some individuals had internet access and their own devices to watch on. Not so at Cobbs Hill Manor or RPC where, especially in the Forensic Unit, the internet is not even allowed as an option for staff.

It was this situation that caused the development of the DVD Ministry (see below), and gradually, a new practice of creating and leading weekly worship emerged. This move toward electronic services evolved over time, but we had a head start over other churches by the fact that we were already used to not meeting in one centralized location following the sale of our campus in 2014.

*... are organic grass-roots ministries growing out of the needs of the people.* They may be overtly "religious" like a Bible Study, or not, such as a community choir. This model believes that we don't have to be talking about God all the time in order to be spreading the Good News; it believes that as we live out our faith and build community, people will "bump up against Jesus" through us. Therefore, if two people share a need or interest, we will sponsor their program for three months as a pilot program.

How do we determine whether or not to continue it after three months? Easy. Answer one question: **Does it create energy and excitement?** Believing that everything the Holy Spirit touches generates energy, excitement and holy presence that is felt by the people associated with it, South says that if an AoF does that, it continues; if it does not, we "drop it like a hot potato."

Think of Acts of Faith as community organizing around spiritual needs and interests.  
(from our AoF promotional literature)

Here are the steps taken to provide worship each week:

In addition to our weekend worship, a new online worshipping community has sprung up on Thursday evenings. That will be reported on below with our New AoF's.

**On Thursday** – 10 days before a worship service – Pastor Deb writes the first draft of the service for a week from the following Sunday. She sends the script for portions of the service to various volunteers (see below) who record their assignments on video and send the file back to the Pastor by noon on Monday.

**On Friday or Saturday**, 8 or 9 days before the service – Pastor Deb sends the musical requests to Andy who records them (hymns –audio only as he plays and sings them and a video of him playing the postlude for the end of the service). He records them on Sunday morning and sends them to her by Sunday night.

**On Sunday night** – a week before the service – Pastor Deb uses video editing technology to create the hymns as we see them: the music on the screen for those who read music, and the words moving across the screen as a ribbon, hopefully coinciding with Andy's singing. This is when she will often write the rough draft of her sermon/reflection for the following week.

**On Monday** – 6 days before the service – the video files sent to the Pastor are downloaded and the words that we see on the screen for prayers or responsive readings are added. Pastor Deb will usually finish her sermon sometime during the day.

**On Tuesday** – 5 days before the service – Pastor Deb records her own parts of the service as videos as well as a second reflection for the Short Service (see the DVD write-up below). She then edits both the Complete and Short Services and watches the first cut of those videos, checking for transitions, mis-naming of people, making sure that when words are on the screen, they match up to the words being said.

**On Wednesday** – 4 days before the service – the DVD master is made, the labels printed, and personal notes are written to each of the recipients. They are placed in paper bags and divvied up for the volunteers who pick them up on Thursday for delivery.

Also on **Tuesday or Wednesday**, Rev. Swift writes the Evening Prayer Service and sends the bulletin to participants in advance of their real-time worship on Thursday.

**On Friday** – 2 days before the Sunday service – both the Complete and Short services are uploaded to South's YouTube Channel so that our folks can worship when and where they want – either by watching YouTube on a phone, iPad, tablet, computer, or Smart-TV, or by watching the DVD (alone or with others).

And, of course, this all begins the next cycle on Thursday of the week when the volunteers are picking up the DVD's for delivery of the discs for the current week's service.

## **VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS**



Our thanks to the following for their ongoing faithfulness so that every week we can see several faces of church members. If you would like to join them, please let the Pastor know and she will work you into the schedule. Currently, assignments are made two months in advance.

**Barb Sixbey** (Penfield, NY), **Barbara Durfee** (Brighton, NY), **Barbara Woodruff** (Brighton, NY), **Carol Santos** (Brighton, NY), **Holly Powell** (Brighton, NY), **Janis Castrogiovanni** (Penfield, NY), **Karen Thomas** (Tucson, AZ), **Linda McLean** (Ithaca, NY), **Martha Moler** (South Jordan, UT), **Mary Lee Miller** (Rochester, NY), **Nancy Rice** (Rochester, NY), **Rachel McGuire** (Rochester, NY), **Rheanotte LaBarbour** (Brighton, NY), **Sonya Kennedy** (Rochester, NY), and **Stena & Gordon Rickner** (Henrietta, NY)



## AoF's that are Moving On ...

This year, for the first time, South bid farewell to two thriving Acts of Faith because they had outgrown what we could sustain in helping them. What a wonderful thing that is!

Our goal to be an incubator for new ministries is a success.

In both cases, these Acts of Faith were transferred to the umbrella of SEAC, the South East Area Coalition, a Neighborhood Preservation Company serving southeast Rochester and its 45 neighborhoods.

### MONROE MILERS YOUTH RUNNING CLUB.

The youth running program pioneered by New Life Presbyterian Church before its dissolution will continue post-COVID to offer a complete running program for youth ages 5-18 in two 6-week seasons (Spring and Fall). The paperwork for the Milers' transfer was completed so they will be ready to resume their program when the COVID ban is lifted. We are proud to have been able to "hold the space" for this AoF as they transitioned from NLPC to SEAC. Look for them on Facebook.



### MOUNT HOPE WORLD SINGERS.

After several successful years, MHWS outgrew what South could provide for its administrative needs and financial support. Moving over to SEAC, the singers will be able to continue building community and fostering intercultural understanding through engaging, high quality, respectful performance of music in original languages from around the globe. <https://www.mounthopeworldsingers.org/>

We are proud of our association with both of these groups and grateful that they will continue to carry the love of South with them into a larger footprint in the world.

## AoF's that will Resume in 2021 ...

Aside from morphing our worship service AoF's into something online, there are other ministries that just can't meet until we are together again in person. At this point, we fully expect these groups and activities to resume – we hope during 2021, depending on the status of the virus in Monroe County.



### CLASS ACT (Christian Leadership And Senior

Spirituality – Applied Christian Thinking) was one of our first Acts of Faith, growing out of the study of *The Story* more than ten years ago at St. John's Meadows. Up until March, this group continued to meet during the first three weeks of the month and discuss life events, read books, and pray together. When things ended abruptly in March, they were tackling Cynthia Bourgeault's book on *Mary Magdalene*.

Largely because of the deep sharing the group does, they have become a major support network and the embodiment of "church" to each other. When members pass on, there is a joyful celebration of all that s/he brought to everyone's life. We all look forward to resuming CLASS ACT when it is possible.



**SLOW SHEEP**, our walking meditation group that gathers one Saturday morning a month from April through October, never got off the ground in 2020. Choosing sites around Monroe County, participants walk together for an hour – often with some sort of thought or reading presented to them at the beginning – and then share breakfast at a local eatery. We all look forward to this gearing up again in the spring of 2021; we figure that all of us will want to be outdoors, walking at a social distance, but just connecting in

person with each other again. If you have ideas for locations or questions about the group, please contact Nancy Rice or the church office.

## Discontinued AoF's ...

There have been some losses in our AoF's this year, too, but unlike most churches that struggle to keep things going, our model has us dropping things "like a hot potato" if there is no longer energy and excitement around them. We have learned that ministries recycle, or God brings a new incarnation to them as needed. Consequently, we honor these AoF's that served their purpose while they were needed and will welcome them, should they become active again.

### BIBLE & BREW and BACK2CENTER.



These two ministries at the Charlotte Harbortown Homes high-rise, were on hiatus even before the pandemic, but it looks like they will not continue. The apartment complex where these groups met for four years, and where most of the participants lived, underwent a huge change in population in late 2019. New residents moved in; several of our AoF Leaders moved out. The groups were taking a "time out" to reassess if



interest and need still existed since the "energy and excitement" had clearly dissipated. Before a determination could be made, COVID hit. When the pandemic ban lifts, we will see if there is still an interest and/or need for our ministries there.

### DINNER & A MOVIE.

This AoF where people meet weekly to have dinner and attend a movie together seems to have run its course for the time being. We will see if there is any energy and excitement in resuming it in the future. (If you feel called to bring people together – maybe not on a weekly basis but maybe monthly, or in your home when it is safe to do so, for discussions and viewing of films – please let the office know.)



### LOL (Love Our Lord) YOUTH GROUP.

Our youth program has been on pause throughout 2020, due to COVID restrictions and the difficulty of arranging safe activities for both the leaders and the youth. Monroe Milers had just begun in March, when the shut-down started. It was our major connection with the kids. Monroe Milers has continued under the umbrella of SEAC and we are proud to have made that connection to help provide for their longevity. We are hoping that we will be able to resume these programs in the fall of 2021. Leaders included Barb Woodruff, Nancy Allinger, Barb Durfee and Janis Castrogiovanni. We had contacts with between 8-10 youth, ages 7-23, along with at least one parent, prior to the shut-down.



## Adapting & Continuing During the Pandemic ...

Several Acts of Faith have been added since the pandemic shut-down on March 15<sup>th</sup>. We will outline those in the next section, but meanwhile, a few of our ministries adapted and *continued* despite the lock-down. Some of those became online presences – primarily through Zoom – but a few remained in-person at a safe distance and completely masked.



Our decade-old community book group, **FOOD FOR THOUGHT** (also know as “the diner book group” because it usually meets on Fridays at Mt. Hope Diner) figured out how to keep themselves together even during the pandemic. They welcomed new people to their group throughout the year. Carol Santos serves as the AoF leader to corral this bunch of enthusiastic readers and sharers.

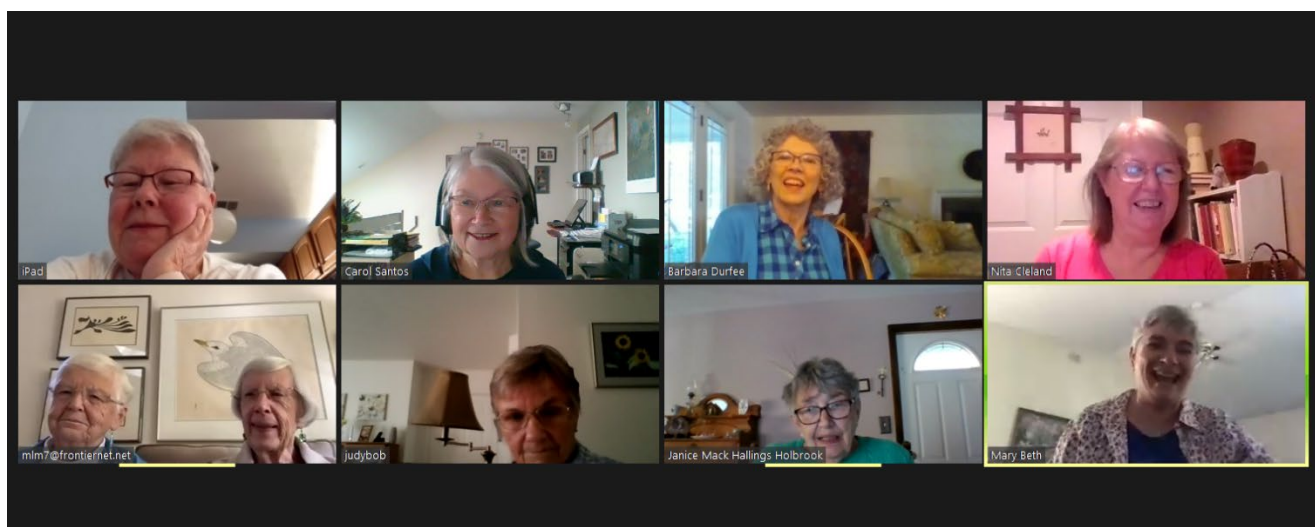
### January/February

Christ in Crisis – Jim Wallis **Jim Wallis** urges America to return to the tenets of Jesus once again as the means to save us from the polarizing bitterness and anger of our tribal nation. In Christ in Crisis, Jim Wallis provides a path of spiritual healing and solidarity to help us heal the divide.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> the group continued its practice of providing meals for the homeless. Several FFT members took a meal to the REACH winter shelter, now on West Main Street and housing close to 55 people in the surge of homeless on the Rochester Streets.

### March

COVID 19 came along and we could not safely meet. We learned to Zoom with each other and continued studying, choosing to meet on early Wednesday afternoon to accommodate babysitting and other obligations of group members.



### April-June

40 Day Journey of Julian of Norwich, a mystic whose visions of Jesus taught her a loving, forgiving God in 14<sup>th</sup> century England.

## July – August

Olive Again, by Elizabeth Strout – the uniquely angular personality of Olive Kitterage meets and interacts with various people in curious study of characteristics.

## September – November

My Grandfather's Blessings by Rachel Remen - small essays that also give nuggets of truth that provided great insight into ways that blessing can be given.

## December

Mary Had A Baby – Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Marilyn E. Thornton - Four African American spirituals took us through the waiting period; Mary Had a Baby, Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow; Children, Go Where I Send Thee, Go, Tell It on the Mountain. Each had meaning to slaves longing for freedom, looking for a safe passage.

We hope to see you with us either on Zoom or at the Mt. Hope Diner on Friday afternoons at 4 p.m. once we can safely be together. If you wish to join in our Zoom discussions, please contact Carol Santos [carolsantos45@yahoo.com](mailto:carolsantos45@yahoo.com) and a link will be sent to you.

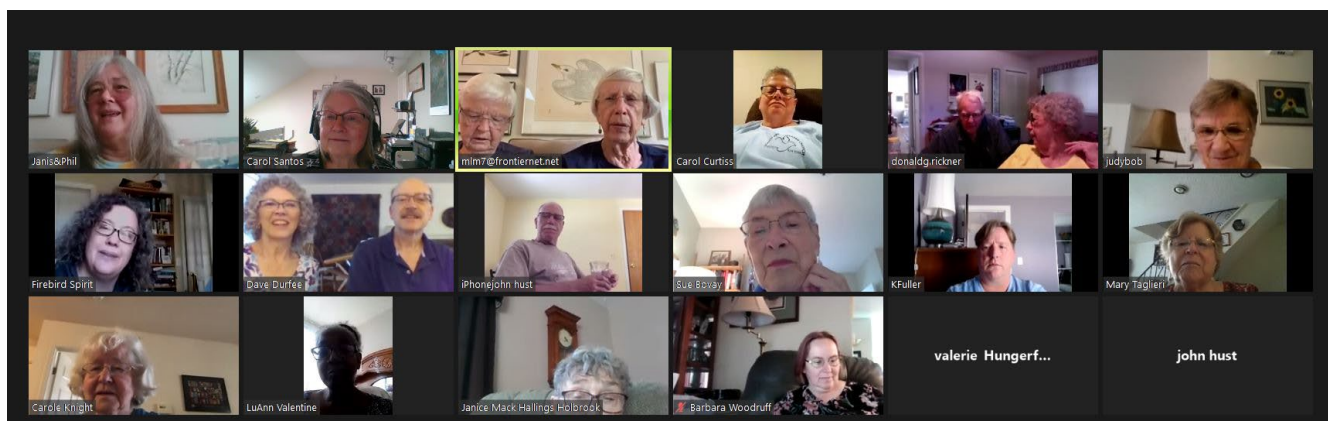
A Blessed and Safe 2021 to all from:

Amy, Barb, Carol, Deb, Jan, Jane, Judy, Marian, Mary Beth, Mary Lee, Nancy R, Nancy W, Nita and Sue.



All of our fellowship times – potlucks, receptions, special events – fall under the ministry of our **LOVE-JOY FELLOWSHIP**. In an effort to keep us all connected, the Friday social hours began in late March and continued through the end of the year. With a high attendance of 20-25 in the early months as people were hungry to see each other and just make sure everyone was ok, to a low at the end of the year, Friday at 4:00 became the time for laying eyes on those we loved and missed.

By the end of the year, we all seemed to have connected around other AoF's so we are discontinuing the weekly social hours. But we will still have some seasonal gatherings as part of this fellowship throughout the year.



Farewell Reception for Pastor Laura in July





South Church is a member of the national Matthew 25 movement, a program of the PC(USA) which focuses on fulfilling our call through scripture:

*44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' - Mt. 25:44-45 (NRSV)*

At the beginning of 2020, our Matthew 25 Act of Faith was growing strong. We had, through Pastor Laura, nurtured the beginning seedlings of a new relationship with St. Joseph's House of Hospitality on South Avenue that provides both food and wintertime emergency housing for the homeless.

The national church initiative focuses on three areas of ministry:

- Building congregational vitality
- Dismantling structural racism
- Eradicating systemic poverty

Before the shut-down, members of our church were volunteering for Sunday afternoon a month during which time they would not only help to feed the guests at St. Joe's House, but they would engage in conversation with them as part of a social time as well.

We were successful in securing a grant from the national church through the Matthew 25 initiative to help offset Pastor Laura's salary at the beginning of the COVID sequester since the socializing aspect of the House was discontinued but feeding our brothers and sisters continued.

And so it went during the summer. Even after Pastor Laura had accepted a call at another church in our Presbytery, our volunteers continued to head down to St. Joe's House every month, make bag lunches for the guests and distribute them.

What will be the future of this Act of Faith?

That is unknown at this time.

As South continues to build relationships with other individuals and churches, as the weather warms, and as COVID no longer keeps us from each other, it may be that we redefine Mt. 25 to include all of our AoF's that address hunger, homelessness, and mental illness.

Until then, we will continue listening for ways that the Spirit calls us to:

***Feed the Hungry, Care for the Sick, Visit those who are in Prison***



*Celebrating the first online Communion*

## NEW LIFE FOOD CUPBOARD.

This South Presbyterian Church Act of Faith serves those in need of food living in the 14620, 14610 and 14607 zip codes or more upon request with a three day supply of food, usually the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays 9:30 to noon.



Despite COVID-19, we maintained our regular hours throughout the year, with masks, outdoor service, and some deliveries. Surprisingly, we saw a decrease in numbers served instead of an expected increase in numbers until December when it picked up.

Congregation Beth Sholom has graciously hosted the New Life Food Cupboard 28 times in 2020 and provided storage for our food in between open dates.

We served 75 different people including 24 children and 6 seniors. We assemble a 3 day supply of dry goods for each household. Quantities depend on Foodlink's household size guide lines. Each household 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 dinner wish list items, and 5 donations to the library on Monroe Avenue, this accumulates to 1974 meals provided in 2020.

Our regulars include: a senior with special food requirements due to allergies to medicines; neighbors without a car who arrive by foot or bicycle; a man who needs knee replacements, but can't afford to lose his income during recovery; a woman who gives back by volunteering at the South Wedge Food Program, and those short term visitors between jobs. One woman was so grateful, she sent Janis a Christmas card!

The word is gradually spreading about our location, and our goal for the future is still to average ten visitors each time we are open. We sometimes walk Monroe Avenue looking to help the homeless, but they have their own routines and often decline help.

Our food comes from three main sources: our Foodlink membership (which includes food covered by USDA grants, NYS HPNAP grants, federal stimulus funds, and the United Way), from our New Life Food Cupboard Fund, and from our generous members and friends of South Presbyterian Church. We welcome non-perishable donations from other sources, as well.

The NLFC work force came from our five steady volunteers: Janis Castrogiovanni (chair), John Hust (most attended and Foodlink delivery greeter), Char Schuth (longest running volunteer and former chair), occasional substitutes Connie Izzo and David Durfee, and South's commitment to Matthew 25 so we can continue for years into the future.



(Pictures are taken from an article by David Kramer published in *Talker of the Town* and published on May 14, 2020.)  
<https://talkerofthetown.com/2020/05/14/the-new-life-cupboard-at-temple-beth-sholom-is-still-open/>

Janis Castrogiovanni - 1/14/2021



Growing out of our worship at Cobbs Hill Manor, **PRAYING HEARTS** began as a monthly prayer time after Pastor Laura celebrated the World Day of Prayer with residents. Joined by two or three members of South Church, the group asked to have an ongoing prayer time which eventually morphed into a combination Prayer Time – Bible Study.

With Suzanne Bennett, one of our new SPC members as the convenor, the group tackled *The Story* in order to give themselves a good foundation in Biblical studies. However, not long into that group, we experienced the COVID shut-down. No one was allowed in or out of Cobbs Hill Manor (which is still the case as of this writing in January 2021).

During the year, Suzanne moved to Wesley Gardens and Cobbs Hill resident, Bob Howe assumed the leadership of this AoF. After finishing *The Story* they tackled *Bad Girls of the Bible*. The group met on Sunday mornings, averaging eight people, gathering every week to explore scripture and its application to their lives together. We all look forward to the day when we can, once again, be around the same table, exploring the word of God.



Like so much in 2020, **SING FOR JOY!** was directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Until the middle of March, we continued to meet regularly most Wednesday evenings in the Briarwood building of St. John's Meadows. Typical meetings began with a hymn-sing, then transitioned into rehearsal of four-part choral repertoire for presentation during Sunday morning worship services.

When the pandemic shuttered our access to the Meadows, we turned to technology to keep us singing together. Since the end of March, we have continued to meet weekly from 6:30-7:30 on Wednesday nights, using the Zoom platform. We share fellowship and a hymn-sing each week. Because of internet latency, it is not possible to hear everyone singing in real time. During the songs, participants' microphones are muted and they sing along as I play and sing from my home piano. Between hymns, we share updates, stories, and jokes. Most weeks, everyone in attendance has an opportunity to select at least two hymns during our hour together.

It was important to me, during this time, that our Wednesday evenings be uninterrupted, as I knew how meaningful it has been to all of us to stay connected and continue to make music together. With that in mind, we did not take our customary summer "vacation," and in fact didn't miss ANY Wednesdays until a mutually agreed-upon respite during the very last week of 2020. We have resumed with the onset of 2021 and intend to continue this online fellowship as long as necessary! Seeing everyone's faces, hearing their voices, and sharing time together has been a true blessing in the midst of these challenging circumstances.

On a sadder note, we did lose a longtime choir member and dear friend, Jane Watkin, during 2020. We are grateful for our time with Jane, and thankful that through the technology available to us, the choir was able to send her a video greeting expressing our love, just days before her passing.



Worship planning meeting





The music for Sunday morning worship services has, of course, also been impacted by the pandemic. Without the contributions of the choir, I've been recording hymns and piano solos from my own home, first with only audio and, more recently, with video as well for the postludes. This fall I was hired on a temporary basis by Gates Presbyterian, to serve in a similar capacity as their accompanist, providing pre-recorded hymns and service music. Deb and Laura certainly keep me busy, and I appreciate more than ever their commitments to their congregations, and to keeping the music programs thriving through the pandemic.

Sing For Joy! currently comprises sixteen members (names in **bold** indicate regular attendees of our Zoom meetings): **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, and **Mary Taglieri**. We are frequently joined via Zoom by **Karen Thomas** (from Arizona!) and have had many other attendees drop in, as well. New members are always welcome (no audition required), and our Zoom hymn-sings are available to anyone with the link and password. To receive the Zoom link, please contact the SPC office ([office@southpc.org](mailto:office@southpc.org)).

Andy Pratt, Minister of Music

## Acts of Faith that Formed Online During the Pandemic

One of the advantages of the Acts of Faith Model of ministry is that it easily adapts to the needs of the people and the physical environment it finds itself in. Because an AoF is an organic group growing from the needs of the people in any given time or place, and because we meet out in the community anyway (and not in one designated church building), responding to peoples' needs and concerns is what we are used to doing.

Thus far, four new AoF's have started since March – all of them online. One is not needed at the moment but stands ready to be resurrected should a need arise. And in addition, one or two others are being explored and may become new AoF's in 2021.

New this year have been:



## Cuppa the Bible



**CUPPA THE BIBLE**, our online Bible group that Zooms on Mondays from 10:30AM – noon. Originally a study of the lectionary readings for the following Sunday, it has now branched out to include extra-Biblical books such as *Disciples of the Way* by Joanna Dewey, PhD – a look at discipleship in the Gospel according to Mark and how it applies to our lives today, and currently, Rob Bell's *Everything is Spiritual*. Membership is open to all – whether currently part of South Church or not, regardless of where you live in the world. Please contact the church office to have the Zoom link sent to you. The ten members are Presbyterian, American Baptist, and Bahai.



**EVENING PRAYER** gathered from 6-7 p.m. on Zoom each Thursday evening with Pastor Deb Swift. Guided by the emailed prayer service prepared by her, ten people from Rochester and Ithaca, who identify as American Baptist, Buddhist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian, apply prayer to what each member is experiencing in her/his life. They interactively engage in a weekly check-in focused on a leading question, opening prayer, selected Scripture and reflection questions, sharing of joys and concerns to be lifted up in

prayer, a communal reciting of The Lord's Prayer and a benediction. The weekly experience provided a forum for sharing our individual stories as well as reflecting our responses to our local, national and global needs during the COVID-19 pandemic as we strove to minimize our isolation and separation. We are looking forward to continuing coming together in Evening Prayer as we move forward with prayer-filled hope.





**PRAYERFUL PAUSE WITH THE PASTOR** is a weekday meditation series of videos offered by Rev. Swift on our YouTube Channel. It is a rare glimpse into her mind and spirituality as she shares with us various spiritual inspirations that occur in our everyday world. Whether looking at water droplets in the garden, drawing parallels between solar lighting and soul-er lighting, or trying to find ways to withstand the barrage of news coverage during this pandemic, Prayerful Pause is a few moments to “focus on something greater than ourselves.” With over 200 of these 10-minute videos, we are sure you will find

something that speaks to you whether you just need a little pick-me-up or are struggling to find your Center. But don't be surprised if you come away with a new understanding of the broad scope of practice contained in the word “prayer.” From the first video in March of 2020 through February 10, 2021, these videos have been viewed 3,111 time.



Our Act of Faith that began ... and completed its service to us for the time being ... was **SOUL-O SISTERS**, a time for women living alone to gather and support each other as the pandemic journey began. Providing a weekly touchstone as we all found our way in the early days of our self-sequestering, Soul-O Sisters ministered to those who have been part of South for quite some time as well as those who learned about us online and needed “a connection.” Starting in March, it was decided that everyone had created their own routine and no longer felt adrift by June. However, this group stands ready to spring into action again, should the need arise – whether in this current incarnation, or in another. “Living solo” is a situation

that many women find themselves in at some point in their lives. When we can keep the “Soul-o” in the “Solo,” we can all get through it easier with God's Grace.

## New Act of Faith **NOT** On-line ...



What to do when the nation closes down, we are reduced to connecting online through Zoom or watching our worship on YouTube, and a significant number of us don't have internet?

### Start a **DVD Ministry**.

Last summer, we wrote and received a grant from the Presbytery of Genesee Valley to buy the equipment and supplies needed that would allow us to reach those folks who don't have internet access through weekly DVD's. The grant has

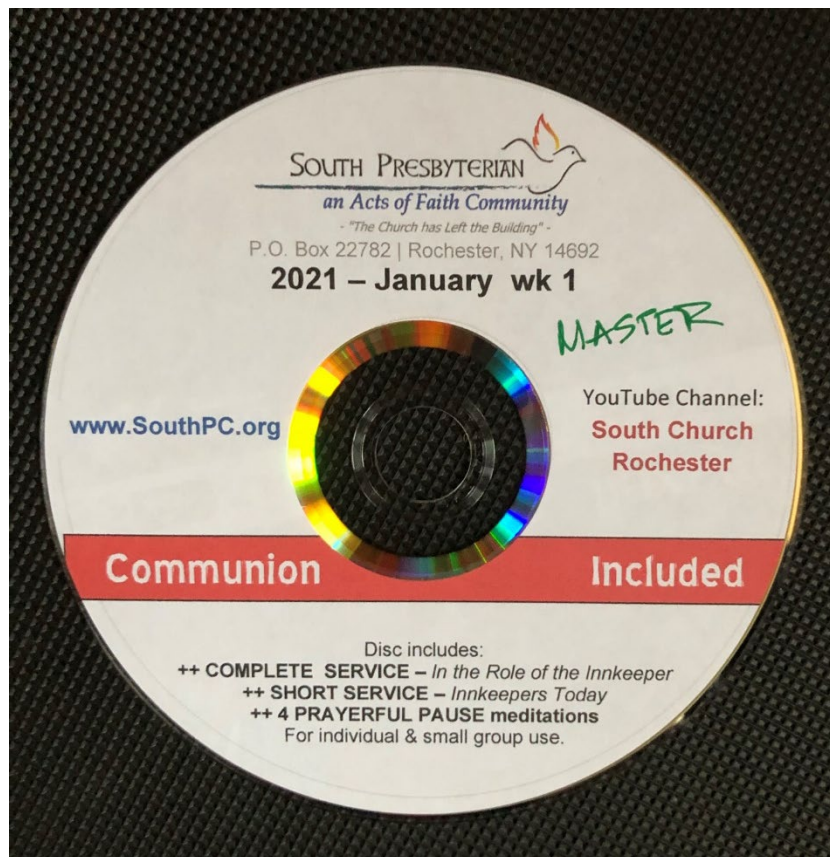
also allowed us to purchase a handful of DVD players for those who don't have them.

The result, as of January, has been the development of a DVD network that includes volunteers who deliver them as well as institutions and individual who receive them every week.

On Wednesdays, Pastor Deb takes the two services prepared for the following Sunday which will be uploaded to YouTube (the COMPLETE service and the SHORT version), combines them with the four most recent Prayerful Pauses, and burns a master DVD for the week. Using a professional template, the viewer will see all of the choices on the menu when they insert the disk. While the menu is displayed, a recording of the chorus of “For Everyone Born,” our unofficial theme song plays in the background. As they click on each of the six options – one at a time – they will be able to either worship with us for 50-60 minutes with all of the responses, hymns, instrumental music, sermon, readings, etc., or with the shorter version which chooses a few of those elements and has a “sermon” that is interactive with questions to be answered as the worshiper pauses the disk to interact with them. They will also have 40-60 minutes of Prayerful Pause meditations each week.

Using a turbo burner purchased with the grant money, Pastor Deb is able to make 9 copies of the master for distribution. While they're burning, she creates labels for the DVD's and also writes notes to each of the members or chaplains receiving the disks so they have a personal note from the Pastor. The labels are affixed; the DVD's are placed in a DVD envelope, and placed in a brown paper lunch bag. (Also added to the bags are printed copies of any eNews emails sent during the week – remember, these folks don't have internet or access to eNews) and then the bags are sealed with the personal notes stapled to them so our volunteers know where to take them. On Thursday, Barbara Durfee and Mary Lee Miller faithfully pick up the DVD packages from the Pastor's porch and take them to their destinations around the city.

For some of our older members living alone at home, this ministry has proven to be a lifeline. They see and hear not only the word of God, but the faces and voices of people they've known for decades. They feel connected and included. For others, i.e. those living at the Meadows, St. John's Home, the Rochester Psychiatric Center, and Cobbs Hill Manor, the DVD's give them an opportunity to gather in a socially distanced way and worship together with us through the service. Where being together in person is impossible, we try to make provisions for individuals to be able to watch the videos either with an existing DVD player or by using one of the portable ones that we provide. This ministry started in September and by year's end, we were delivering 9 DVD's that account for an estimated 40 people having access to worship and prayer-filled meditations every week. The AoF Model has, once again, been successful in meeting people where they are and not expecting them to come to us or conform to "traditional worship."



We have been through a lot in 2020, but our ministries have remained strong because of our faith, our flexibility, and the adaptability of our AoF Model. Yet because of the changing nature of our world and therefore our ministry, it can be confusing about "where things stand." On the pages 21-22, you will see our current AoF offerings as of January 31, 2021.

*To God be the Glory!*



# Participation Numbers of 2020 Acts of Faith

|  | # of different<br>people<br>involved | Avg attending | # of times they<br>met | Avg.Attending<br>x # of Mtgs. | NOTES   |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| B2C  | 5                                    | 3             | 8                      | 24                            | This group is now on hiatus and may not continue.   |
| Bible & Brew                                 | 6                                    | 3             | 8                      | 24                            | This group is now on hiatus and may not continue.   |
| CLASS ACT                                    | 9                                    | 7             | 6                      | 42                            | This group will resume when we are able to again meet in person.  |
| Cuppa the Bible                              | 12                                   | 9             | 38                     | 342                           | Began 3/30/20   |
| Dinner & a Movie                             | 5                                    | 3             | 9                      | 27                            | This group will not continue in its current form but may well resurrect in a new format.  |
| DVD Ministry                                 | 50                                   | 49            | 15                     | 735                           | people involved = 2 vols and 4 individual members who receive them, plus group worship ... 10 Cobbs Hill, 20 Psych Center, 15 Meadows. Began 9/25/20  |
| Evening Prayer                               | 10                                   | 9             | 35                     | 315                           | Began 4/20/20   |
| Fellowship of Faith                          | 73                                   | 45            | 10                     | 450                           | Met in-person through 3/08/21   |
| Food for Thought                             | 15                                   | 11            | 42                     | 462                           | Met weekly in person until 3/13/20 and then resumed online, weekly, beginning 5/10/20. In addition to their own AoF meetings, they also made meals for REACH Homeless center on 4 occasions as their own "mission outreach." There were 4 of these meals and each served 20 people (Mostly different individuals each time) + 6 volunteers. |
| ..... Food for Thought<br>.....REACH Dinners | 86                                   | 23            | 4                      | 92                            |   |
| Love-Joy Fellowship                          | 28                                   | 7             | 39                     | 273                           | Began 4/3/20  |
| LOL Youth Group                              | 14                                   | 9             | 3                      | 27                            | 4 leaders who attended all meetings.  |
| Matthew 25                                   | 80                                   | 61            | 12                     | 732                           | 4 different volunteers (guesstimate 76 different people receiving food over the year) with an avg of 1 volunteer per time. The number of people who received meals and conversations with our volunteers averaged 60 per time.  |
| Micah Circle                                 | 15                                   | 9             | 7                      | 63                            | This group was primarily AoF Leaders engaged in mutual support. They met in person 3 times and online another 4 times.  |
| Monroe Milers                                | 80                                   | 75            | 1                      | 75                            | Met only once before the shut-down. 20 coaches. 55 kids.  |
| New Life Food Cupboard                       | 80                                   | 7             | 28                     | 196                           | Avg 4 visitors and 3 volunteers each time we are open. 75 different clients during the year and 5 volunteers  |
| Praying Hearts                               | 9                                    | 6             | 14                     | 84                            |   |
| Sing for Joy                                 | 20                                   | 16            | 51                     | 816                           | 17 regular attendees + 3 others who attended. They met every week except Christmas.   |
| Slow Sheep                                   | 0                                    | 0             | 0                      | 0                             |   |
| Sonray                                       | 40                                   | 28            | 5                      | 140                           | 5 volunteers plus patients  |
| Soul-o Sisters                               | 6                                    | 4             | 6                      | 24                            |   |
| SouthHeart                                   | 15                                   | 8             | 6                      | 48                            |   |
|  | 658                                  |               |                        | 4991                          |   |

**In-Person Contacts:** During this year of our COVID shut-down, **658 different individuals** attended at least one of our Acts of Faith at least once during the year. We had **just under 5,000 (4,991) in-person contacts** with individuals.

**Video Contacts from our YouTube Channel: South Church Rochester:** From March 13, 2020 - February 12, 2021, we had **3,111 views of our daily meditation series, Prayerful Pause with the Pastor**, **2,299 views of our COMPLETE worship services** (40-60 minutes , traditional worship) and **202 views of our SHORT worship services** (30-40 minutes, interactive worship) which began to be produced on 09/27/20. We do not know how many people were viewing these videos. We know only how many times the videos were viewed.

**That is 5,612 VIEWS for our channel.**

**360 videos were uploaded during that time,** including special ones including: Messages from the session, Stewardship and online giving instructions, special services for Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Juneteenth, an Election Message, Advent Communion, an Insurrection Prayer Service, and our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.



# SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN

## an Acts of Faith Community

- "The Church has Left the Building" -

Ministry<sup>®</sup> which, in many ways, is a 21st century embodiment of the first century Christian community.

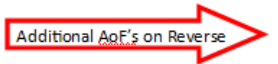
**An Act of Faith (AoF)** is an organic grass-roots ministry growing out of the needs of the people. It may be overtly "religious" like a Bible Study, or not, such as a community choir. This model believes that we don't have to be talking about God all the time in order to be spreading the Good News; it believes that as we live out our faith and build community, people will "bump up against Jesus" through us. Therefore, if two people share a need or interest, we will sponsor their program for three months. How to determine whether, or not, to continue it after three months? Easy. Answer one question: **Does it create energy and excitement?** Believing that everything the Holy Spirit touches generates energy, excitement and holy presence that is felt by the people associated with it, South says that if an AoF does that, it continues; if it does not, they discontinue it immediately and await the movement of the Spirit to direct their next endeavor.




















Updated: 01-28-21

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>During this time of Pandemic Shut-Down, our Acts of Faith have continued to meet—some in person where groups live in common residence—some through Zoom Meetings—and all are able to worship through our YouTube Channel, where we provide DAILY meditation videos and WEEKLY worship services. Because everything is lay-led, there remains an abundance of creative ministry and <b>3 NEW AoF's have formed during the sequester ... so far!</b></p> <p><i>To God be the Glory!</i></p> | <p><b>CLASS ACT</b> </p> <p>Christian Leadership And Senior Spirituality ... Applied</p> <p><b>PANDEMIC SUSPENSION</b></p> <p>Christian Thinking, Discussion,</p> | <p><b>Cuppa the Bible</b><br/>ONLINE BIBLE STUDY</p>  <p>You supply the "cuppa" - the Spirit supplies the message</p> <p><b>Zoom</b> MONDAY, 10:30 a.m.</p> |  |
|  <p><b>EVENING PRAYER</b></p> <p>Prayer Service in real time</p> <p><b>Zoom</b> THURSDAY, 6 p.m.</p>  | <p><b>food for thought</b><br/></p> <p>Building community through our love of books, ideas, and each other.</p> <p><b>Zoom</b> WEDNESDAY 2:30 p.m.</p>            | <p><b>LOVE-JOY FELLOWSHIP</b><br/></p> <p>Time to socialize and be the church at rest.</p> <p><b>Zoom</b> FRIDAY, 4 p.m.</p>                              | <p><b>25 Matthew</b></p> <p>Monthly Volunteering with the homeless, hungry and poor at the local Catholic Worker ministry - St. Joseph's House of Hospitality.</p> <p><b>Hands-on; Hearts engaged.</b></p> <p>Contact the Church Office</p>  |
|  <p><b>New Life Food Cupboard</b></p> <p>Emergency Food support for those who need it.</p> <p>2nd, 4th, and 5th THURSDAYS 9:30 a.m. — Noon</p> <p>Congregation Beth Sholom (1161 Monroe Avenue, 14620)</p>  | <p><b>WORSHIP WITH US</b></p> <p><b>IN REAL TIME, OR ON YOUR TIME</b></p> <p><b>DAILY   WEEKLY   OR ON DVD's</b></p> <p><i>We are open 24/7 — and so is God!</i></p> <p>(Information on the reverse side.)</p>                                       |  |  <p><b>PRAYERFUL PAUSE</b></p> <p>A weekday meditation series housed on our YouTube Channel to spend a few moments "thinking of something greater than ourselves."</p> <p><b>MONDAY—FRIDAY; 6-13 mins ea.</b></p> |

Please check the website (see reverse side) for up-to-date information. Here is a list of South's current Acts of Faith. Everyone is welcome, regardless of religious belief, faith tradition, or lack thereof. Come on ... check us out!

Additional AoF's on Reverse 

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <h2>Praying Hearts Bible Study</h2> <p>A week time to pray together and be centered in God's love.</p> <p>Cobbs Hill Manor<br/><b>SUNDAY MORNING</b></p>  <p>PRAYING HEARTS</p>  | <h2>24/7 WORSHIP on YouTube: South Church Rochester</h2> <p>Daily meditations with the pastor, uploaded M-F and weekly worship services — both COMPLETE (45-60 mins) and a SHORTER version (30-40 mins) complete with sacraments, singing, prayer, reflection,</p> <p><b>Thursday Evening Prayer Service: Zoom</b> and scripture.</p> <p>DVD's are available weekly for those who don't have internet connection.</p>    |  |  |
|  <p>Walk with others while meditating.</p> <p>Usually followed by breakfast out.</p> <p>Beautiful local locations.</p> <p>Check Website for Next Walk<br/><b>April - October</b></p>   |  <p>Mid-week opportunity to sing church - and non-church songs.</p> <p>No Audition.</p> <p><b>WEDNESDAY 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.</b></p>    | <h2>What's <u>YOUR</u> idea for our next Act of Faith?</h2>  | <h2>FIREBIRD SPIRIT</h2> <p>By harnessing the Firebird Spirit, South resources and supports other transforming churches &amp; institutions.</p> <p>Professional experts from multiple disciplines and denominations provide insight from the Firebird team that works across the country sharing lessons learned and solutions pioneered by South Church.</p> <p><b>Contact Kevin Fuller, Director of Operations</b><br/>(kfuller@firebirdspirit.org)<br/>to schedule a visit or plan a workshop in your area.</p> <p><b>(585) 476 - HOPE (4673)</b></p> |
|  <p>Weekly, we produce DVD's of the COMPLETE and SHORT worship services as well as several of the PRAYERFUL PAUSE episodes from that week. Contact us if you would like to purchase one.</p>  |  <p>Our ministries at the Rochester Psychiatric Center's Chapel and the Regional Forensic Unit will resume when it is safe for us to do so.</p> <p><b>PANDEMIC SUSPENSION</b></p>   |  |  |
| <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">     </div> <p>So ... when someone asks "Where's your church?" we can <i>literally</i> say: "Where would you like us to be?" because we are currently in 8 neighborhoods in Rochester, Brighton, and Henrietta, at 13 different locations and ONLINE. And isn't that what it means to be the Body of the Risen Christ? South Presbyterian has just under 50 "official" members, but the Acts of Faith Community had just under 6,000 (5,926) different people involved through over 25,000 documented contacts in 2019. From those, there were 255 <i>active participants</i> in our AoF's in 2019, and every week, 110 people worshipped through our services.</p> |   |  |  |
| <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;">  <div> <p>We proudly say, "The Church has Left the Building" and we are quick to pray:</p> <p><i>"Put us where you want us, and show us what to do!"</i></p> <p>For updates, to learn more, or to contact us, please visit the website. <a href="http://www.SOUTHPC.org/welcome">www.SOUTHPC.org/welcome</a></p> <p><b>(585) 271.5078</b> P.O. Box 22782   Rochester, NY 14692</p> </div>  </div>  |   |  |  |



# **Coordinating the Work of the Church**



# Session

*The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.*

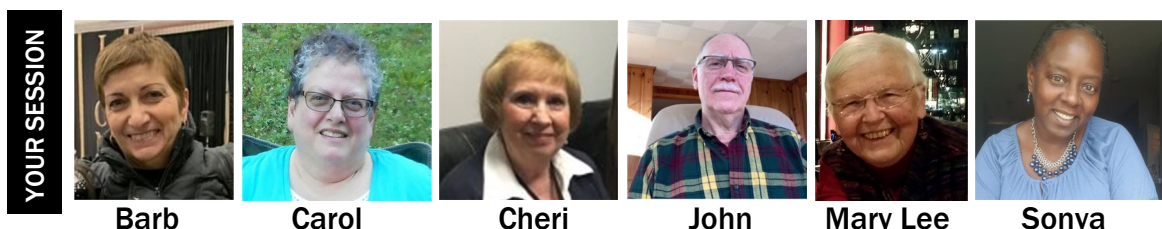
– G-3.0201 PC(USA) Book of Order 2019-2021

The presence of a Session is what makes us a Presbyterian Church; having a Session – the council of ordained Ruling Elders – is a requirement for any group to become a Presbyterian Church. We began the year with six elders who are responsible for both the spiritual and the secular health of our faith community.



SPC Session

Over the years, our Session has risen to every challenge: selling the building, creating the new Acts of Faith Model and, launching a not-for-profit (Firebird Spirit), for example. But this year provided its own unique level of challenge when – with almost no advance notice – we suddenly learned that we would not be allowed on the campuses of St. John's Meadows, Cobbs Hill Manor, or the Rochester Psychiatric Center. Those are the three locations where our four worshipping communities meet in person.



Through their steady attention to the needs of our congregation, and constantly praying for the Spirit to guide them, this year's Session not only made the successful transition to our online presence, but also supported the move to our new office space, navigated through the process of bidding farewell to Pastor Laura, and jumped in as participants and leaders in our various Acts of Faith.

Each Session elects someone to be its Clerk – the person who is responsible for the record-keeping, minutes-taking, and more. At South, the Clerk works closely with the pastor to set the agenda for the Session; the Clerk is a member *pro tem* of every committee. Mid-year, Sonya Kennedy became Clerk with transitional help from the previous Clerk, Mary Lee Miller. This was an historic election as Sonya is the first woman of color to be South's Clerk of Session.

Throughout the year, the Session has been looking closely at the financial viability of South in the future. They have named a task force to present options to the group – and ultimately to the congregation – as needed. That Task Force includes the Clerk, our Treasurer, the Director of Operations, and our Pastor.

During the year two of our Elders needed to step down. We received and reluctantly honored the request to leave the group from Cheri Steron and Barb Sixbey. Since we are uncertain of future plans, the Session is suggesting that, for the time being, the number of Elders remain at its current level of four, as opposed to the six that we began the year with.

The hours that these folks volunteer to our congregation is impressive, but what truly stands out is their willingness and ability to work through differences, to build consensus, to prayerfully discern the will of God, and to deeply trust that the Spirit is working through everyone at the table.

Please continue to hold the Session in your prayers.

2020 Session Members:

Sonya Kennedy (Clerk), Carol Curtiss, John Hust, Mary Lee Miller, Barb Sixbey, Cheri Steron



# Deacons & Partners in Ministry

*The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.*

– G-2.0201 PC(USA) Book of Order 2019-2021

Figuring out the best way for our Deacons to minister to our members when the members are across several Acts of Faith has been a real challenge. At the beginning of this year, a new approach was adopted which seems to hold the most promise: deacons are assigned to the geographic areas of our worship AoF's as the primary contact point.



We currently have four Deacons who are assigned as follows:

Ruth Dempsey to our Charlotte ministries  
Barb Woodruff to our Monroe Avenue AoF's  
Brian Preston & Stena Rickner to the Meadows-based AoF's.

And, in addition, we commissioned Partners in Ministry for each location. The one that was most crucial this year involved our friends at Cobbs Hill Manor and we thank their PIM, Barbara Durfee for going above and beyond the call of duty with her faithful card-sending to residents there.

We began the year like any other with the Deacons hosting the Annual Meeting potluck at our favorite park lodge in Brighton. This year we used that occasion to welcome a new member, John Coombs, and to ordain Cheri Steron as our first Elder who had not belonged to either South or New Life churches but who came to us through the Fellowship of Faith.

A month later, we were in lock-down for COVID-19.

Throughout the year, our Deacons have called members, sent holiday cards and other notes to remind everyone that we are all still connected. We are together, though apart.

But the thing about Deacons is this: ***Once a Deacon, always a Deacon*** and given the number of ordained Deacons we have in our congregation, it is no wonder that we all took care of each other so well: meals for those recovering from surgery, check-in calls and an abundance of cards.

This pandemic has been a once in a lifetime event, but as a faith community, we are strong, healthy, and connected.

Our Deacons continue to play an important role in maintaining that health and we are grateful for their ministry of compassion and presence.



Barb

Brian

Ruth

Stena

# Report from the Office



I am pleased to report the church operations have run smoothly throughout the pandemic.

In March, we packed up the old offices at Metro Park and moved to our new space right before the state lockdown. The new office space is considerably cheaper, and Firebird Spirit started sharing the rent expense in October. The church office expense is now just \$325 per month and I expect to negotiate continuing terms from the management company as the pandemic recovery progresses. Additionally, Firebird Spirit has fully repaid the \$10,000 loan it received from South.

The church received a PPP loan for \$47,600 in April, to fund the continuation of our full-time payroll. The forgiveness application was completed in December. Following the use of the PPP funds, the staff of the church reconfigured their workloads and schedules to reduce our payroll expense as the pandemic continued to affect in-person service and, therefore, our normal income. In anticipation of a new round of PPP with the new government stimulus, I discovered the second, third and fourth quarters of 2020 have seen a 41.5% reduction in income compared to 2019.

Every effort has been made to reduce our expenses during the pandemic. I'm cautiously optimistic about our finances going into the new year and stand ready for any quick decisions as this pandemic unfolds... but hoping for a vastly happier new year!

Kevin J Fuller, Director of Operations

## Nominating Committee

Every Presbyterian Church is required to have a Nominating Committee to help people discern their call to be leaders of our congregation. This is the one committee that does not report to the Session but to the congregation as a whole. In other words, the Session has no authority over the Nominating Committee.

We thank the 2020 Nominating Committee (Carol Curtiss – *chair*, Nancy Rice and Judy Wandtke are the members still active in church) for their faithful service. The slate of officers that they are proposing for our leadership is as follows. **We will also receive additional nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting. If you wish to nominate someone from the floor at the Annual Meeting, please check with them first and make sure that they feel called to serve.**

One of the things that we have come to understand at South is that we want our leaders to feel called – led by God – to lead at this time in their lives and at this time in the life of our church. We do not look for people to volunteer just because somebody needs to do the job.

In addition, we will be voting on the President of the South Presbyterian Corporation. After many years of serving, Gordon Rickner will be stepping down and the Nominating Committee is putting forth the name of John Hust.

The congregation will need to do more than choose our Elders, Deacons and President. It will also vote to elect the 2021 Nominating Committee at the Annual Meeting. The group meets once or twice a year, as needed. We hope that you will open yourself to the Spirit and the possibility of serving on our NomCom. Following is the slate of officers presented by the Nominating Committee.

## South Church Leadership – 2021

### SLATE OF OFFICERS

(x) is the number of their term – first or second three-year term. Each may serve a maximum of 6 consecutive years.

Class is the year their current term is completed.

Those in **bold-underlined** are part of the slate to be voted on at the 2021 Annual Meeting.

### Session

Sonya Kennedy, Clerk of Session

| <u>Class of 2021</u>           | <u>Class of 2022</u>         | <u>Class of 2022</u> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Sonya Kennedy (2)              | Mary Lee Miller (1)          |                      |
| John Hust (1)<br>(2-year term) | <b><u>Nancy Rice</u></b> (1) |                      |
|                                |                              |                      |
|                                |                              |                      |

### Deacons & Partners in Ministry

| <u>Class of 2021</u> | <u>Class of 2022</u>           | <u>Class of 2022</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Brian Preston (2)    | Ruth Dempsey (1)               |                      |
| Barbara Woodruff (1) | <b><u>Judy Wandtke</u></b> (1) |                      |
|                      |                                |                      |
|                      |                                |                      |

**Partners in Ministry:** Joann Chalfant, Barbara Durfee, Holly Powell

### Corporation Officers

President  
Secretary  
Treasurer

**John Hust**  
Sonya Kennedy  
Nancy Rice

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

### Pastor

Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, Moderator of Session



# FINANCES



# Report from the Treasurer

As you have all experienced, to our sadness, 2020 was a year like no other! What is true for so many things has also been true for the financial picture for South.

If you will turn to the Budget vs. Actuals (p. 31) in your annual report, you will see that last January we projected total income of \$276,550. That was reliant to some degree on Worship Collections of \$83,250.



Because of the suspension of in-person worship services, our Pledge Income fell by about \$14,000, but Additional giving and Non-pledge income rose greatly, leading to Worship Collections of \$90,875 – approximately \$7625 more than we projected! We are very thankful for the faithfulness of you all, without whose efforts this could not have happened!

Still another positive development for us this year was the Payroll Protection Plan established by Congress as a part of COVID relief programs. It was designed to be a loan program to enable employers to retain employees despite falling income due to pandemic income losses. We received \$47,600, which was used almost entirely for our employee expenses and meant we did not have to dip into our investments. Fortunately, the first PPP loan has been forgiven! Hallelujah! (There is another PPP beginning now in January-February (2021), which we will also apply for.)

Looking at our expenses, we exceeded our initial projections almost entirely only in the items related to our shift to electronic media in March. The expenses that were smaller than anticipated were largely in personnel categories, resulting from the PPP money described above and the earlier-than-anticipated departure of Associate Pastor Laura Bachmann.



**On balance, you will see that we have been blessed this year with a positive balance of income over expenses for the first time in many years!!!**

I am deeply grateful for the superb work of our pastoral, administrative and musical staff this year. They have been heroic in shepherding us through this most trying year.

As we enter 2021 with prayerful hope, the outcome for last year was truly a collaborative effort on the part of us all! May we continue this path, with the efforts of us all under the loving care and direction of our God.

Nancy Rice, *Treasurer*

## Staff Reductions this Year – and our ongoing thanks to them!

In addition to the reduction of our pastoral staff (see page 5), our other staff members also endured reductions in time, income and/or redesigned their job requirements in order to help us with our financial challenges. All remain committed to South Church and we lift them up with our thanksgiving and God's blessings.

**Director of Operations, Kevin Fuller** initiated his own 75% reduction in time and income but continues to serve us with energy, imagination, creativity and love.

**Minister of Music, Andy Pratt** took a 34% pay cut and yet continued to meet online with Sing for Joy! every week (except Christmas) because it provided an opportunity for us to come together through music.

**Pastor Deb Swift** began working half-time with Downtown Presbyterian Church in September. DUPC pays half of her Terms of Call package to South which offsets the cost of keeping her with us.

## South Presbyterian Church

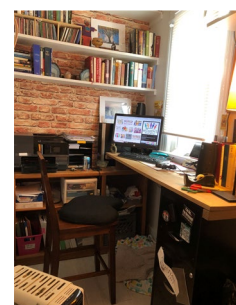
### BALANCE SHEET As of December 31, 2020

|  | TOTAL               |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                          |                     |
| Current Assets                         |                     |
| Bank Accounts                          |                     |
| 1110 Checking, CNB                     | 14,499.57           |
| 1120 Petty Cash                        | 6.00                |
| <b>Total Bank Accounts</b>             | <b>\$14,505.57</b>  |
| Other Current Assets                   |                     |
| 1310 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Income | 79,897.58           |
| 1320 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Growth | 19,771.08           |
| <b>Total Other Current Assets</b>      | <b>\$99,668.66</b>  |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b>            | <b>\$114,174.23</b> |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                    | <b>\$114,174.23</b> |

## South Presbyterian Church

### BALANCE SHEET As of December 31, 2020

|                                     | TOTAL               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>  | <b>\$35,793.72</b>  |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>            | <b>\$36,268.72</b>  |
| Equity                              |                     |
| 3100 Opening Balance Equity         | 159,472.43          |
| 3200 Retained Earnings              | -110,907.65         |
| Net Income                          | 29,340.73           |
| <b>Total Equity</b>                 | <b>\$77,905.51</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b> | <b>\$114,174.23</b> |



# South Presbyterian Church

## BALANCE SHEET

As of December 31, 2020

|   | TOTAL            |
|---|------------------|
| <b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>             |                  |
| Liabilities                               |                  |
| Current Liabilities                       |                  |
| Other Current Liabilities                 |                  |
| 2110 Payroll Taxes Payable                |                  |
| 2120 Federal Withholding                  | 0.00             |
| 2130 Social Security                      | 0.00             |
| 2140 Medicare                             | 0.00             |
| 2150 State/Local Income Tax Payable       | 0.00             |
| <b>Total 2110 Payroll Taxes Payable</b>   | <b>0.00</b>      |
| 2400 Pass Through Funds                   | 0.00             |
| 2500 Pass Through Offerings               |                  |
| 2510 One Great Hour of Sharing            | 0.00             |
| 2520 Peacemaking                          | 85.00            |
| 2530 Christmas Joy                        | 0.00             |
| 2540 Disaster Relief                      | 0.00             |
| <b>Total 2500 Pass Through Offerings</b>  | <b>85.00</b>     |
| 2600 Prepaid Pledges                      | 390.00           |
| 2710 HRA Withholdings                     |                  |
| 2720 HRA - Deb Swift                      | 0.00             |
| <b>Total 2710 HRA Withholdings</b>        | <b>0.00</b>      |
| <b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>    | <b>\$475.00</b>  |
| <b>Total Current Liabilities</b>          | <b>\$475.00</b>  |
| Long-Term Liabilities                     |                  |
| 2800 Grants, General                      |                  |
| 2810 Genesee Valley Presbytery Grant Fund | 650.00           |
| <b>Total 2800 Grants, General</b>         | <b>650.00</b>    |
| 2850 Acts of Faith Funds                  |                  |
| 2860 Youth LOL Fund                       | 3,938.53         |
| 2870 New Life Food Cupboard Fund          | 8,120.94         |
| 2875 Firebird Spirit Fund                 | 500.00           |
| 2880 Monroe Milers Fund                   | 0.00             |
| 2890 Mt. Hope World Singers Fund          | 0.00             |
| <b>Total 2850 Acts of Faith Funds</b>     | <b>12,559.47</b> |
| 2910 New Life Neighborhood Legacy Fund    | 3,986.34         |
| 2920 New Life PC Fund                     | 8,284.77         |
| 2930 Elliot Fund                          | 276.78           |
| 2940 Christian Education Fund             | 1,262.55         |
| 2950 Memorial Fund                        | 5,824.69         |
| 2960 Hope Fund                            | 2,787.41         |
| 2970 SBA-PPP Fund                         | 161.71           |

## South Presbyterian Church

### BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: 2020 APPROVED BUDGET - FY20 P&L CLASSES

January - December 2020

|   | TOTAL               |                     |                    |                 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|   | ACTUAL              | BUDGET              | REMAINING          | % OF BUDGET     |
| Income  |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 4100 Per Capita Contributions                         | 501.67              | 850.00              | 348.33             | 59.02 %         |
| 4200 Worship Collections                              |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 4210 Pledge Income                                    | 58,471.41           | 72,500.00           | 14,028.59          | 80.65 %         |
| 4220 Pledgers' Additional Giving                      | 17,505.00           | 750.00              | -16,755.00         | 2,334.00 %      |
| 4230 Non-Pledgers & Misc                              | 14,898.67           | 10,000.00           | -4,898.67          | 148.99 %        |
| <b>Total 4200 Worship Collections</b>                 | <b>90,875.08</b>    | <b>83,250.00</b>    | <b>-7,625.08</b>   | <b>109.16 %</b> |
| 4300 Earned Income                                    |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 4320 Consulting                                       |                     | 30,000.00           | 30,000.00          |                 |
| 4360 Publications                                     | 49.03               | 3,500.00            | 3,450.97           | 1.40 %          |
| 4370 NYS Reimbursements                               | 1,900.00            | 3,750.00            | 1,850.00           | 50.67 %         |
| <b>Total 4300 Earned Income</b>                       | <b>1,949.03</b>     | <b>37,250.00</b>    | <b>35,300.97</b>   | <b>5.23 %</b>   |
| 4400 Support  |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 4410 Individual Donations                             | 606.25              |                     | -606.25            |                 |
| 4420 Foundation Grants                                |                     | 69,000.00           | 69,000.00          |                 |
| 4430 Mission Support                                  | 8,750.00            | 10,000.00           | 1,250.00           | 87.50 %         |
| 4440 GV Presbytery Grants                             | 1,417.00            | 1,200.00            | -217.00            | 118.08 %        |
| 4470 NLPC Legacy Operating Support                    | 75,000.00           | 75,000.00           | 0.00               | 100.00 %        |
| 4490 SPC Support to Acts of Faith                     | 12,939.65           |                     | -12,939.65         |                 |
| <b>Total 4400 Support</b>                             | <b>98,712.90</b>    | <b>155,200.00</b>   | <b>56,487.10</b>   | <b>63.60 %</b>  |
| <b>Total Income</b>                                   | <b>\$192,038.68</b> | <b>\$276,550.00</b> | <b>\$84,511.32</b> | <b>69.44 %</b>  |
| <b>GROSS PROFIT</b>                                   | <b>\$192,038.68</b> | <b>\$276,550.00</b> | <b>\$84,511.32</b> | <b>69.44 %</b>  |
| Expenses  |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 5100 Pastor   |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 5110 Cash Salary, Pastor                              | 29,118.30           | 33,970.00           | 4,851.70           | 85.72 %         |
| 5120 Housing, Pastor                                  | 16,153.83           | 20,000.00           | 3,846.17           | 80.77 %         |
| 5130 Utilities, Pastor                                |                     | 7,000.00            | 7,000.00           |                 |
| 5140 SECA, Pastor                                     | 3,409.35            | 4,221.00            | 811.65             | 80.77 %         |
| 5150 Board of Pensions, Pastor                        | 18,547.00           | 22,455.68           | 3,908.68           | 82.59 %         |
| 5160 Professional & Travel Expenses, Pastor           | 3,010.61            | 5,500.00            | 2,489.39           | 54.74 %         |
| 5170 Continuing Education, Pastor                     |                     | 800.00              | 800.00             |                 |
| <b>Total 5100 Pastor</b>                              | <b>70,239.09</b>    | <b>93,946.68</b>    | <b>23,707.59</b>   | <b>74.76 %</b>  |
| 5200 Associate Pastor                                 |                     |                     |                    |                 |
| 5210 Cash Salary, Associate Pastor                    | 10,456.73           | 25,091.00           | 14,634.27          | 41.68 %         |
| 5220 Housing, Associate Pastor                        | 11,846.12           | 28,000.00           | 16,153.88          | 42.31 %         |
| 5240 SECA, Associate Pastor                           | 1,634.16            | 3,862.56            | 2,228.40           | 42.31 %         |
| 5250 Board of Pensions, Associate Pastor              | 8,587.85            | 21,072.82           | 12,484.97          | 40.75 %         |
| 5260 Professional & Travel Expenses, Associate Pastor | 1,216.14            | 5,335.00            | 4,118.86           | 22.80 %         |
| 5270 Continuing Education, Associate Pastor           |                     | 800.00              | 800.00             |                 |
| <b>Total 5200 Associate Pastor</b>                    | <b>33,741.00</b>    | <b>84,161.38</b>    | <b>50,420.38</b>   | <b>40.09 %</b>  |
| 5300 Employees  |                     |                     |                    |                 |



## South Presbyterian Church

### BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: 2020 APPROVED BUDGET - FY20 P&L CLASSES

January - December 2020

|  | TOTAL            |                  |                  |                 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|  | ACTUAL           | BUDGET           | REMAINING        | % OF BUDGET     |
| 5310 Wages, Minister of Music                | 13,683.11        | 19,642.00        | 5,958.89         | 69.66 %         |
| 5320 Wages, Administration                   | 31,202.77        | 54,420.00        | 23,217.23        | 57.34 %         |
| <b>Total 5300 Employees</b>                  | <b>44,885.88</b> | <b>74,062.00</b> | <b>29,176.12</b> | <b>60.61 %</b>  |
| 5400 Employer Expenses                       |                  |                  |                  |                 |
| 5410 Payroll Taxes                           | 3,434.14         | 6,100.00         | 2,665.86         | 56.30 %         |
| 5420 Worker's Compensation/Disability        | 654.50           | 1,400.00         | 745.50           | 46.75 %         |
| 5430 Staff/Volunteer/Leadership Appreciation | 425.46           | 650.00           | 224.54           | 65.46 %         |
| <b>Total 5400 Employer Expenses</b>          | <b>4,514.10</b>  | <b>8,150.00</b>  | <b>3,635.90</b>  | <b>55.39 %</b>  |
| 5500 Professional Services                   |                  |                  |                  |                 |
| 5510 Pulpit Supply                           | 425.00           | 600.00           | 175.00           | 70.83 %         |
| 5520 Music Supply                            |                  | 1,000.00         | 1,000.00         |                 |
| 5540 Legal Fees                              |                  | 1,000.00         | 1,000.00         |                 |
| 5550 Independent Contractors                 |                  | 1,000.00         | 1,000.00         |                 |
| 5560 Contracted Services                     | 1,875.67         | 7,318.00         | 5,442.33         | 25.63 %         |
| <b>Total 5500 Professional Services</b>      | <b>2,300.67</b>  | <b>10,918.00</b> | <b>8,617.33</b>  | <b>21.07 %</b>  |
| 5600 PCUSA & Mission                         |                  |                  |                  |                 |
| 5610 Per Capita                              | 1,768.55         | 1,200.00         | -568.55          | 147.38 %        |
| 5620 PCUSA Mission Pledge                    | 1,100.00         | 1,100.00         | 0.00             | 100.00 %        |
| <b>Total 5600 PCUSA &amp; Mission</b>        | <b>2,868.55</b>  | <b>2,300.00</b>  | <b>-568.55</b>   | <b>124.72 %</b> |
| 5700 Facilities                              |                  |                  |                  |                 |
| 5710 Insurance                               | 911.00           | 750.00           | -161.00          | 121.47 %        |
| 5720 Office Rent                             | 8,665.00         | 17,760.00        | 9,095.00         | 48.79 %         |
| 5730 Telephone/VOIP                          | 70.00            | 100.00           | 30.00            | 70.00 %         |
| 5740 Venue Rentals/Donations                 |                  | 750.00           | 750.00           |                 |
| <b>Total 5700 Facilities</b>                 | <b>9,646.00</b>  | <b>19,360.00</b> | <b>9,714.00</b>  | <b>49.82 %</b>  |
| 5800 General Church Expenses                 |                  |                  |                  |                 |
| 5802 Office Supplies                         | 545.99           | 1,500.00         | 954.01           | 36.40 %         |
| 5804 Copier Lease                            | 1,019.77         | 2,150.00         | 1,130.23         | 47.43 %         |
| 5806 Copier Usage                            | 1,154.99         | 2,100.00         | 945.01           | 55.00 %         |
| 5808 Postage                                 | 272.70           | 840.00           | 567.30           | 32.46 %         |
| 5810 Computers/Technology                    | 4,490.74         | 2,100.00         | -2,390.74        | 213.84 %        |
| 5812 Internet Service                        | 713.91           | 1,020.00         | 306.09           | 69.99 %         |
| 5814 Web Presence                            | 1,596.68         | 750.00           | -846.68          | 212.89 %        |
| 5816 Publicity/Advertising/Marketing         |                  | 300.00           | 300.00           |                 |
| 5818 Printing                                |                  | 1,400.00         | 1,400.00         |                 |
| 5820 Instrument Repair & Tuning              |                  | 200.00           | 200.00           |                 |
| 5822 Music Supplies                          |                  | 100.00           | 100.00           |                 |
| 5824 Worship Supplies                        | 364.67           | 200.00           | -164.67          | 182.34 %        |
| 5826 Hospitality                             | 421.16           | 2,300.00         | 1,878.84         | 18.31 %         |
| 5834 Subscriptions                           | 107.00           | 60.00            | -47.00           | 178.33 %        |
| 5840 Other Event Expense                     |                  | 2,500.00         | 2,500.00         |                 |
| 5842 Memberships/Dues Expense                |                  | 100.00           | 100.00           |                 |

## South Presbyterian Church

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS: 2020 APPROVED BUDGET - FY20 P&L CLASSES  
January - December 2020

|   |                     | TOTAL                |                      |                 |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|   | ACTUAL              | BUDGET               | REMAINING            | % OF BUDGET     |
| 5844 Other Acts of Faith Expense          | 4,382.33            | 530.00               | -3,852.33            | 826.85 %        |
| 5848 Bank/Monetary Fees                   | 337.65              | 400.00               | 62.35                | 84.41 %         |
| 5850 Miscellaneous Expense                |                     | 500.00               | 500.00               |                 |
| 5854 SPC Support to Acts of Faith         | -5,700.00           |                      | 5,700.00             |                 |
| <b>Total 5800 General Church Expenses</b> | <b>9,707.59</b>     | <b>19,050.00</b>     | <b>9,342.41</b>      | <b>50.96 %</b>  |
| Unapplied Cash Bill Payment Expense       | 650.00              |                      | -650.00              |                 |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                     | <b>\$178,552.88</b> | <b>\$311,948.06</b>  | <b>\$133,395.18</b>  | <b>57.24 %</b>  |
| <b>NET OPERATING INCOME</b>               | <b>\$13,485.80</b>  | <b>\$ -35,398.06</b> | <b>\$ -48,883.86</b> | <b>-38.10 %</b> |
| Other Income                              |                     |                      |                      |                 |
| 4500 Other Income                         | 2,725.40            |                      | -2,725.40            |                 |
| 4520 Gain (Loss) on Investments           | 13,129.53           |                      | -13,129.53           |                 |
| <b>Total 4500 Other Income</b>            | <b>15,854.93</b>    |                      | <b>-15,854.93</b>    |                 |
| <b>Total Other Income</b>                 | <b>\$15,854.93</b>  | <b>\$0.00</b>        | <b>\$ -15,854.93</b> | <b>0.00%</b>    |
| <b>NET OTHER INCOME</b>                   | <b>\$15,854.93</b>  | <b>\$0.00</b>        | <b>\$ -15,854.93</b> | <b>0.00%</b>    |
| <b>NET INCOME</b>                         | <b>\$29,340.73</b>  | <b>\$ -35,398.06</b> | <b>\$ -64,738.79</b> | <b>-82.89 %</b> |



**Ecumenical Prayer Service at Election Time**

# Behind-the-Scenes Heroes

As we have seen throughout this “Yearbook,” South Presbyterian Church’s Acts of Faith have continued to redefine “church” despite a pandemic. None of this would have been possible without some of our Behind-the-Scenes Heroes who have helped us to keep in touch with the location managers, our people in the various settings, and those whose calling to their ministries have kept them going. Everyone is important. These folks are examples of what it looks like to go above and beyond normal expectations in order to facilitate our ministries.



A very special thank you to these AoF friends!

**Janis Castrogiovanni** who has successfully overseen our databasing of members, updates, assisting with production of reports, etc. A “system” is only as good as the data it has in it. Thanks to Janis we have a high standard for our contact information.

**Rev. Sarah Culp**, chaplain at St. John’s Home, who weekly receives the DVD’s and shares them with those who need them – including Renee Rosenbaum, a long-time friend of South.

**Barbara Durfee and Mary Lee Miller** who weekly deliver DVD’s to seven different locations around the city.

**Kevin Fuller**, our Director of Operations who has single handedly saved us thousands of dollars through his work to downsize and his quick response to the COVID loan application.

**Brandon Gordon**, Activities Director at Cobbs Hill Manor who is responsible for sharing our DVD’s with residents there and now that they are in lock-down, he takes the portable DVD player room to room so that residents can have personal contact and use our services and meditations to help alleviate their loneliness.

**Sister Elaine Hollis**, chaplain at the Rochester Psychiatric Center who weekly shares our DVD’s with both the civil and forensic unit patients and staff.

**John Hust** who consistently picks up the food orders for the Food Cupboard from Foodlink and worked heroically to get our office relocated on the weekend of the first COVID shut-down.

**Rev. Darryl Powell** who has offered to be our representative at the Meadows, providing pastoral care to our folks when we can’t get to see them.

**Brian Preston** who became the primary Deacon contact this year when person and health situations plagued the other Deacons over the course of the year.

**Nancy Rice**, our extraordinary Treasurer who keeps track of our investment portfolio and coordinates hers schedule to be available for check signing on a weekly basis.

**Carol Santos**, the coordinator of Food for Thought who facilitates their outreach mission dinners to the REACH emergency housing facility.



# **The State of the Church – 2021**

*The Pastor's Look Ahead*



# The State of the Church

## (from the Pastor's Point of View)

Whether it's the State of the Union, the State of the State, or the State of the City ... all of the reports are from one person's vantage point. In this case, it happens to be mine. I think it's true of all churches, but especially small ones, that the Pastor's perspective is unique and is often where all other perspectives (financial, educational, mission & ministry, pastoral care) come together. What is especially important for all of us to remember about being a Presbyterian Church, however, is that it is the Session (not the Pastor) who makes all the decisions (I am but one member of the Session), and we are part of a connectional system known as the Presbytery of Genesee Valley. What that means is that we are *not* a system where I can make decisions on my own that affect us as a whole, and we are accountable to our sisters and brothers in Christ through the Presbytery.



That having been said, I am underscoring here that there is nothing being put in this State of the Church essay which is news to the Session. And as is so often the case with South's Session, we are of one mind, having worked through any individual concerns that we might have had.

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This Annual Report not only speaks to the resiliency and creativity of our members, but also to the adaptability of the Acts of Faith Model which we have all created together.

The amount of ministry that continued during the pandemic and which *easily transitioned* into new manifestations and expressions of ministry when the nation shut down is truly a testimony to what God has been doing with us and preparing for us over the last ten years.

Our first AoF's that met inside the building (Tuesday prayer, SouthHeart Fellowship, etc.) began in 2011 and in 2012 we ventured out to the Diner and Bruegger's for our first out-of-the-building ministries. We sold the building and moved out in the summer of 2014 which this year will mark the seventh anniversary (the third for New Life members). Everything that God has led us to do has been preparation for where we are now, it seems.

But the question remains: *Where do we go from here?*

There are three different lenses through which to view that answer: Mission & Ministry, Church Administration, and Finance.

## Mission & Ministry

In terms of our Mission & Ministry, we have never been stronger. I fully expect that during 2021 we will return to in-person worship and gathering of some AoF's. But let's be clear:

***It will not be the "normal" that we had before.***

- We will (hopefully) continue to be aware of transmitting germs.

- Some people will want to keep worshiping when it suits them – on a weekday or in the middle of the night and not just on a Sunday mornings so we will have to find a way to accommodate both.
- We have to continue to include those who are now part of us but living around the country.
- Some of our AoF's *prefer* to stay online.

Any way you look at it, I think we are going to have to be a hybrid ministry combining both in-person and on-line gatherings. How will that inform our self-identity?

And depending on the CDC guidelines, we will have to decide if we even want to meet in person if we can't sing, do responsive readings and even say the Lord's Prayer together.

There are many questions to think about.

One thing that was very telling as to the effectiveness of our Ministry & Mission this year was our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Performed as a Zoom meeting with members leading readings and music from their own homes, 30 people attended on Zoom. Immediately after the service concluded, it was edited and uploaded to our YouTube Channel. An additional 27 people watched it over the next 24 hours. Fifty-seven people celebrated the birth of Jesus with us. That is only a dozen less than we had in-person the year before.

In terms of our Mission Statement, here is who we say that we are called to be:

### The Mission / Vision / Calling of South Presbyterian Church

It is the Mission / Vision / Calling of South Presbyterian Church to live out the command of Jesus: *Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in [my] way of life* (Mt. 29:18, *The Message*). We embody our commitment to being a missional church through the practice of our Acts of Faith Model of Ministry and fostering grass-roots programs that spread the love of the Risen Christ through worship, education, and the arts. We hold that all believers are the hands and heart, the embrace and healing presence of Christ's love, acceptance, justice, and joy in the world.

**Adopted:** February 5, 2016

If we are looking at the future state of our Mission & Ministry, I'd say we are doing a most excellent job and there's no reason to think that that should stop.

## Church Administration

Everything that goes on in a church – all of the programs and activities ... all of the office work and hospital visitations ... all of the pot-lucks and special celebrations – they happen because we have volunteer committees and boards.

Now, to be sure, churches don't *have* to have Deacons. We happen to because some of our members feel called by God to this ordained ministry of presence and hospitality. But many Presbyterian churches do not have them.

What we *do* have to have ... what every Presbyterian Church must have is a Session – a group of ordained Ruling Elders who agree to provide for both the spiritual and the physical well-being of a congregation.

The other requirement? A Nominating Committee that is elected by the congregation (not the Session).

That's it.

But as the Session and I look at the future of our “wee kirk,” we see a few truths starting to emerge and one of them is that we are running out of those who can be those church leaders.

Many of our people have the energy and excitement for *ministry*; not many of our people have energy and excitement to serve as Elders or Deacons for one reason or another. Most of our members have been ordained to one office or the other and they are now winding down their commitments that require the skill sets of serving on those boards. Some of them feel they have “been there, done that” and there is no interest in serving again. And because many of our Acts of Faith are either with transient populations or those who have cognitive challenges, we have a decreasing pool from which to draw for leadership.

Without people to populate a Session and a Nominating Committee, we will not be able to remain a viable Presbyterian Church.

BUT ... there are other options.

Because of the success of our Acts of Faith, we might find a church that is interested in having us join them. A pastor could work with the AoF’s for part of the time and with other aspects of their church the rest of the time.

As we have done for the last 13 years, we need to remain open to creative solutions.

“South Chapel of X Presbyterian Church” could provide a ready-made mission field for that larger congregation and bring everything that we have become to them for their congregation. Our days would not be over. Our Acts of Faith could keep doing what they’re doing, but our administrative responsibilities would be covered by the larger body.

The Session and I have been discussing these possibilities for over a year now. I think that 2021 will be a year of further discussion as we discern the path that God is creating for us to move forward.

## Finances

Selling the building in 2014, we estimated that we would have seven years of life left beyond that point. Just look at all the people whose lives have been touched by us since then.

And now this year – for the first time in anyone’s memory – we have a small budget surplus.

We have extended the seven year window by a year or two. Certainly, my work with the Downtown Presbyterian Church and having them share the expenses of the pastor helps us out.

Through Kevin’s hard work and creative thinking, we have pared down our expenses to almost the lowest level possible.

As long as our giving stays robust, we can continue as we are now.

On-line giving is up this year. Thank you! People are donating through our website and we are beginning to get donations related to Prayerful Pause and online worship which is a lovely thing.

However, we need to move forward (perhaps as outlined above with another more financially solvent church helping us) in order for us to have long-term sustainability.

Again, I believe that we will see some action in this area this year.

So the bottom line for our State of the Church is that as the CHURCH we are doing very well:

- Active Ministries
- Engaging new people all the time
- Living out our Mission

But ... we may have to do some reconfiguration around our designation as “church.” It might be that God is calling us to join with someone else so we can keep doing what we’re doing *and* add to their opportunities to be “out in the community.” We all need to be prayerfully discerning about the next step.

And ... as has always been the case with South in our long history ... the Holy Spirit seems to provide for our every need, just when we need it. So far, so good. We will keep praying and paying attention to the movement of the Spirit.

When I look at how we have not just survived but truly *thrived* during COVID, I am humbled by the care that we have all shown each other. Just think of what we’ve done. A congregation where the average age is somewhere north of 70 – with many in their 80’s – is connected *online* both for video worship and for real-time zoom gatherings. We ARE the church, my friends. We continue to grow and learn, to deepen our faith, to laugh and cry together.

As we turn our sights now to 2021, there is still a lot of uncertainty:

- How and when will we all get vaccinated?
- How and when will we be allowed back into the Meadows, Cobbs Hill Manor, and the Psych Center?
- How and when will be comfortable at the Diner or other locations?
- Even when we are *able* and allowed to do those things, will we all *want* to?
- Which AoF’s will choose to remain online?
- What new AoF’s will be emerging as our needs change and we start to re-emerge from this time of hibernation and sequester?
- How will we have been changed by this COVID year?

Yet, amid the uncertainty, let us remember the great constancy in our lives: The love of God ... the hope of Jesus ... and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We are a resurrection people and we continue to pray,

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

To God be the glory, my sisters and brothers!

I am humbled to remain your pastor and fellow sojourner,

*Pastor Deb*

The Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, *Pastor*  
02-12-21 | ROCHESTER, NY

