2023 Annual Report



"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

1 Corinthians 13:12



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THIS SPECIAL YEAR

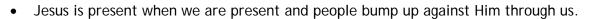
In the life of a church, *every* year is special. But in the fall of 2023, we began a year-long celebration lifting up 175 years since the beginning of the West Brighton Bible Chapel which gave birth to South Presbyterian Church. And that's not all! We also began the second *decade* of our life as a 100% missional church since selling the church property and living through our Acts of Faith model of ministry. This *Annual Report* is not just for our members, but is also a report to the world on the first decade of this new way of being church. Because of the model's adaptability, South Presbyterian has become a "test kitchen" for new models of ministry and it is exciting!



This has been a year of doing the "normal" church work of worship, potlucks, classes, mission giving, rehearsals for our musical groups and living through the vicissitudes and joys of community life as people moved, married or dealt with medical challenges. We continued to welcome new members, including our first individual whose sole experience of us is through our online YouTube channel. And we continue to redefine how churches operate with our Session members living in three different states. And through it all we have grown in our faith as we re-viewed how we came to be where – and who – we are today.

That journey through our history and our impact on the larger community were never more fully experienced than at our Gala Celebration in September. Throughout this report, you will read testimonies and experiences of how Jesus changes lives through the Acts of Faith where a membership of 34 can have over 12,200 contact points for Christ ... all of them bearing witness to the fact that for 175 years, those who came before us were laying the foundation for who we have become today. They were hard-working people of faith who dared

to do unconventional things. And whether our journey brought us here through South Presbyterian Church on East Henrietta Road or New Life (a.k.a. Mt. Hor) Presbyterian Church on Monroe Avenue, we are part of a long heritage of Jesus-followers who recognize that:



- The Spirit will find a way to reach out to people in a language that they can understand, and that "language" can be anything - movies, book groups, walking groups, anti-racism work, or even traditional worship.
- God loves us no matter what. We are beloved of our Creator and nothing can stop that love from reaching us not even death itself.

Pastor Deb



What follows is the report of our church in 2023, and like all of our ministries, it is a group effort and dedicated to the Living God.

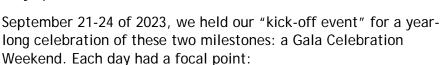
Happy reading!

Gala Celebration



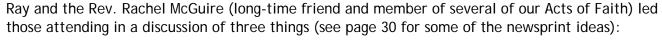
When residents formed the first Sunday School in a one-room schoolhouse in 1847, and when they later established the West Brighton Bible Chapel which later morphed into South Presbyterian Church around the turn of the twentieth century, they could never have guessed what we would become almost two centuries later.

2024 marks the 175th anniversary of South's beginnings. It also – amazingly enough – marks the beginning of our second *decade* as a 100% missional church, i.e. one without a building, going to the people to create community and share the love of God, the presence of the Risen Christ, and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.



Thursday, **September 21**st: The Rev. Dr. Ray Jones, Director of Theology Formation and Evangelism for the denomination, and a long-time friend of South Church arrived to begin marking this special event. Once again, the Sisters of St. Joseph - other friends of South Church - provided hospitality and free lodging for our quest.

On the evening of Friday, September 22nd, the Love-Joy Fellowship convened an All AoF Potluck at Carmen Clark Lodge during which



- 1. What has "worked well" in the last 10 years?
- 2. Where is God calling us next?
- 3. What will life look like "post-Deb" when our Pastor retires in the not-too-distant future?



Saturday, September 23rd we were hosted by Third Presbyterian Church who donated their space for two events: a Panel Discussion of "What's Next for the Church?" and a Reception and Awards Ceremony to honor our history and partnerships with community groups.

The Panel Discussion was moderated by our Presbytery's Transitional Leader, Susan Orr and included Ray Jones along with our Elder Barb

Sixbey and **Pastor Whitney Scoville** who has just started a new worshiping community called Pray & Play for families with children. The discussion was an amazing conversation from multiple





perspectives of local initiatives and the national church. A video of the panel discussion is available through our website.

At the reception which followed, each Act of Faith had a presentation board they had prepared outlining their meeting time and their purpose. Visitors toured the room, stopping at each and speaking with members of that ministry. One of the highlights came when South was awarded Proclamations from the U.S. House of Representatives, the NY State Assembly, the City of Rochester, and the Monroe County Executive Adam Bello came to present (in person) the Proclamation from the County Legislature. Those, as well as letters of congratulations from various community partners can be found on our website:

https://southpc.org/ It was high praise for those who have worked so hard over the years to bring us to this point. County Exec and Community Partners
Celebrated our Acts of Faith Community









On Sunday, September 24th at Fellowship of Faith, we used our worship service with Ray Jones and a special reflection from Pastor Deb (who was unable to attend because of illness) read by Mary Lee Miller, and augmented by Ring for Joy!, Sing for Joy! and Living Bread Ministry to kick off our anniversary year.







All Letters from our Partners and Elected Officials are available on our Website



OUR ACTS OF FAITH

Mission & the Model

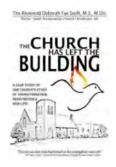
Our Mission

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 communities and programs that spread the love of the Risen Christ. 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 Revised: May 9, 2023



The AoF Model

In 2014, after 165 years on Mt. Hope Avenue, we, as a church, discerned that we were called to take the energy and excitement of our Spirit-led congregation and move out into the community. Why expect people to come to one building for their needs to be met when Jesus went to the people; he didn't wait for them to come to him. And what evolved was the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry which, in many ways, is a 21st century embodiment of the first century Christian community outlined in the book of Acts.

The first precept is that each Act of Faith occurs in the context of the larger community – at a diner, a coffee shop, a psychiatric center, a senior living community, or similar gathering place.

The second precept is that an Act of Faith strives to be member-led.

The third precept is that all Acts of Faith are equal; no one Act (not even Sunday worship) carries more weight or significance in the life of the church.

The fourth precept is that the Session (the Church Council) is willing to try almost anything as a pilot program for three months. At that time it will become clear if it is energy-producing or energy-depleting. Energy-producing Acts are continued; energy-depleting Acts are quickly dismantled.

An Act of Faith (AoF) is an organic grass-roots ministry growing out of the needs of interests of the people. It may be overtly "religious" like a Bible Study, or not, such as a community book group. 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, our Session has said that if an AoF does that, it continues; if it does not, we discontinue it immediately and await the movement of the Spirit to direct our next endeavor.



This AoF Model calls for us to create communities based on shared experiences and interests right where the people already are! And there are four basic precepts (see previous page).

This year, our Acts of Faith model flourished. We were again the focus of another article from the Presbyterian News Service (page 8), another appearance on WXXI's *Connections with Evan Dawson* (available through our website) and also a two-part interview for a podcast for the 1001 New Worshiping Communities initiative called *New Church New Way* (also accessible through our website).

The success of South's missional work is directly related to the Acts of Faith (AoF) model. As of 12/31/2023, South had 34 members (in addition to a dozen Affiliate Members and less than a handful of Constituent Members). We had 16 active Acts of Faith this year that touched the lives of 400 different people and yielded more than 11,100 contacts through our ministries.

Act of Faith	# Different People This Yr	Avg # of People	# of Meetings	Notes	Total Contacts* Avg#xMtgs+Other People
Chosen Ones				To be activated in the Spring of 2024.	
Cuppa the Bible	11	9	46		416
DVD Ministry	15	12	46		555
Evening Prayer	13	9	46		418
e-Worship	23	23	12	Leaders - 23 Views on YouTube - 1,172 83 subscribers	1,278
Fellowship of Faith	70	38	52		2,008
Food for Thought	12	6	40		252
Living Bread	3	2		80 loaves of bread during the year	83
Love-Joy	53	32	2		85
Matthew 25	55	20	12	20 people fed each time, 3 volunteers	275
MT25 Study Group				This is seasonal as the need and interest arise.	
New Life Food Cupboard	88 (incl vols)	8	28	2 Volunteers x 28 Sessions - 56 contacts Of the 84 people, 23 were children and 11 were seniors	4,075 meals 84 different people
Ring for Joy!	11	9	45		407 Plus listeners
Senior Spirituality	6	4	25		102
Sing for Joy!	16	12	40		484
Soul Sustainability	7	5	4		22
Water from the Well	18	12	46		556
	401	<<< T0	TAL NUMBI	ER OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE	
* Total Contacts are UNDER-reported. The average # attending was multiplied by the # of meetings. Then the number of different participants greater than the average # attending was added on. However, MANY of those others attending were engaged more than once. These numbers may be as many as 50 contacts more.		TOTAL LOCAL >>> TOTAL CONTACTS INCLUDING YOUTUBE >>>	11,100 contacts* 12,200 times that people "bumped up		
					against Jesus" through us.

And in addition to these "local" ministries, we had 1,100 views on our YouTube channel in 2023.

That means that more than 12,200 times, people
"bumped up against Jesus" through us this year.

Faith & Worship September 20, 2023

The 40-member faith community will salute its varied ministries in a big way this weekend

by Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service



Nearly a decade ago, South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, sold its building to focus on investing in a wide array of ministries. The congregation, which worships each Sunday in a Rochester senior center, will hold a gala celebration this weekend. (Contributed photo)

LOUISVILLE — This weekend, <u>South Presbyterian Church</u> in Rochester, New York, will celebrate the beginning of the second decade of selling its building and implementing its <u>Acts of Faith</u> community, a throwback to a first-century model of being the church.

After selling its building in 2014, the congregation — which now numbers about 40 — embraced a prayer it has prayed many times since: "Put us where you want us, God, and show us what to do."

2024 will mark 175 years since the founding of the church, and South Presbyterian <u>plans</u> <u>public celebrations</u> beginning Saturday. The Rev. Dr. Ray Jones III, director of <u>Theology</u>, <u>Formation and Evangelism</u>, will join the celebration and help lead worship at a senior center where South Presbyterian worships.

"I continue to be thankful for God's serendipitous grace in connecting me with the leaders of South Presbyterian Church," Jones said. "I have learned so much from their courage and willingness to change. They boldly engaged the new thing God was doing in their midst by selling their church building and creating Acts of Faith across Rochester. They made the gospel decision to leave their building and go where the people live their lives in the community."

The Rev. Dr. Ray Jones III



"As their ministry continues to change hearts and lives," Jones said, "this expression of the body of Christ exemplifies God's faithfulness and love for all people."

The Rev. Deb Swift, South Presbyterian Church's pastor, said that 15 years ago, the congregation determined that if it held onto its building and made needed repairs, the church would run out of money in seven years. "I thought it was hyperbole, but it wasn't," said Swift. "We started doing these [Acts of Faith] ministries even before we sold the building."

Eventually a 1001 New Worshiping

<u>Community</u> was formed. Currently the church sponsors 14 Acts of Faith groups, which include:

- <u>Cuppa the Bible</u>, a weekly Bible study with this tagline: "You supply the 'cuppa' the Spirit supplies the message."
- <u>Living Bread Ministry</u>, where members bake bread regularly and offer a variety of loaves wrapped in new dish towels to anyone who may need encouragement or special prayers.

- <u>Matthew 25 Discussion Groups</u>, focused study groups dealing with the issues of racism, poverty, hunger and homelessness.
- <u>Senior Spirituality</u>, small support groups that first study the aging process with Swift and then accompany each other along the way.
- <u>Soul Sustainability</u>, a social group of 20-somethings working to sustain the
 environment, their spirits and themselves by creating a safe place to define their faith
 community.

Swift explains the Acts of Faith ministry model in a video that can be viewed here.

The Rev. Deb Swift

"It's about redefining church," Swift said. "In our case, we embraced the first-century model when there was no centralized church location. We go wherever someone has an interest or a need, and we do organic, grassroots community organizing around that spiritual theme." Each of those programs is an Act of Faith, she said.

"God finds a way to speak to us in a language we can understand," Swift said. "We know that from the first Pentecost in Acts 2, and who are we to say what someone else might experience as worship?"



During the pandemic, several Acts of Faith groups morphed into online groups, which has allowed them to build community beyond the Rochester area. The current array of 14 Acts of Faith groups includes participants from North Carolina, Florida, Utah, Washington state, New Jersey and Ithaca, New York. Ten ministries remain in-person in Rochester. Soul Sustainability, a group of five Millennials, is the most recent Acts of Faith group to form.

Soul Sustainability is one of 14 members of the Acts of Faith community.



"I had them to dinner and I said, 'If we are going to have a future, it's going to be you,'" Swift said. "They were super excited." One who'd trained as a graphic artist created Soul Sustainability's logo — a skull with a flower growing through its eyeball. "I let the older folks know," Swift said, pausing a beat. "They thought it was great."

When one Soul Sustainability granting source didn't come through, other Acts of Faith groups donated \$1,200 to pay for a few months of Soul Sustainability activities,

including a trip to the local planetarium. One member told Swift, "That's where I feel the presence of God. That's where I see where I am in the universe."

Each of the 14 Acts of Faith will make a brief presentation during the weekend celebration.

"This is a model anyone can do," Swift said, and she wrote a case study how-to workbook, "The Church has Left the Building," to show how it's done. A separate nonprofit, Firebird Spirit, exists to work with other faith communities, including presbyteries, considering such a move.

A 1 p.m. panel on Saturday will explore the theme "What's Next and How do We Get There?" Susan Orr, transitional leader and stated clerk of the <u>Presbytery of Genesee Valley</u>, will emcee the event, and Jones and others will speak. After that, Acts of Faith groups will celebrate the many community partnerships that have formed over the last 10 years. <u>Third Presbyterian Church</u> in Rochester will host the celebration.

"This weekend, we just want to have fun," Swift said. "Too rarely do we stop to embrace what God has done in our midst. God has done amazing things through this merry band of believers. They just keep saying yes to God."

In Addition ...

In addition to the above article from the Presbyterian News Service, Pastor Deb was invited once again to be part of *Connections with Evan Dawson* on WXXI-AM to speak about the changing nature of the church.

AND, in December, she was the featured guest on a podcast of the PC(USA)'s 1001 New Worshiping Communities titled *New Church New Way*.

Links to both the local interview and the national podcast are available on our website: SouthPC.org.



Acts of Faith in Action Lessons Learned in the First Decade

Everything Can Be Worship

"Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches and uses the Church as he wills."

~ Book of Order F-1.0202

Underlying the development of the AoF Model is the understanding that everything can be worship - indeed, anything can be worship if it is approached with the intention of either offering it to God as an act of worship or experiencing the Spirit of God coming through a specific activity.





In terms of those activities that are traditionally associated with "worship" we offer a weekly communal Presbyterian service (Fellowship of Faith), an online mid-week prayer service (Evening Prayer), weekly online video worship on our YouTube Channel (South Church Rochester), and our online service which is distributed on DVD's for those who do not have internet access.

However, we take seriously the Basic Tenets of the Reformed Faith which include that God is sovereign over all. We also honor the Pentecost experience as found in Acts 2 where it is demonstrated that everyone heard the preaching in a language that they could understand. Based on those two foundational understandings, we believe that if God is present in everything, and that God will find a way to speak to each of us in a way that has meaning for us, we are loathe to suggest that the singular way to worship God is through corporate worship such as a Sunday service. While that experience may be worshipful for some, it may not be for all. Therefore, we believe that each Act of Faith may constitute a form of worship for its participants and we seek to respect them as such.



The result is that our Acts of Faith cover a wide range of activities - from book study to bell choir, from a discussion group about a movie or streaming service to online prayer, or from baking bread to feeding the hungry.

The Acts of Faith Community IS the Church

Faith in Action is how this church has felt called to redefine "church" over the last twelve years, but there are some basics that we maintain. The PC(USA) *Book of Order* tells us that:

In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, our Church is **faithful to the** mission of Christ as it:

Proclaims and hears the Word of God,

- ... responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and
- ... inviting all people to participate in the new creation;

Administers and receives the Sacraments,

- ... welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ,
- ... bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection,
- ... anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and
- \dots committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ,

- ... living in the strength of God's promise and
- ... giving itself in service to God's mission.
 - ~ Book of Order F-1.03 The Notes of the Reformed Church

We honor and claim the Great Ends of the Church and seek to provide:

- ... the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- ... the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- ... the maintenance of divine worship;
- ... the preservation of the truth;
- ... the promotion of social righteousness; and
- ... the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.
 - ~ Book of Order F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church
- ... and in order to accomplish those, we seek to live through the following passage from Ephesians.

¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

~ Ephesians 4:11-13





Some Ways We Differ from Other Churches

Creating a new model of ministry means that the "same ole/same ole" isn't going to work. For instance:

- Our Session members live in 3 different states. If we believe that all Acts of Faith are "equal" ... if we are de-centralized without a building so all of our Session meetings are held on Zoom ... why not embody a new way of thinking of the Session. Services of installation take place online.
- Even those who only worship/participate online can become members. This year, we welcomed our first individual who, though local, discovered and worships with us online. As they were welcomed during a Session meeting, their mother (a member of another local church) also attended. Now, that new member is a volunteer e-Worship leader. This means that New Member Classes also have had to be modified.
- Stewardship needs to be broad-based, intentionally including appeals and invitations to all AoF's and not just Sunday worship.
- Congregational meetings must include an online option even if most of the members are local so that everyone's voice is heard.
- Without a building there is no Building & Grounds or Property Maintenance Committee, but instead "physical needs" revolve around setting up the worship or meeting space, placing signage so that people can identify the Act of Faith, and things like delivering food to Food Cupboard patrons, transporting items to and from the church office, and coordinating locations for Love-Joy Fellowship, along with transporting the necessary supplies.
- Redefining the role of the Deacons and "Mission Outreach" happens because often it is other members of an AoF who respond to each other's needs as a Deacon Caring Team would do. Our Deacons coordinate responses to member/participant needs, and because we are a 100% missional church, we do not have a separate "Mission Outreach Committee." Everything we do is "mission" since we are in the community being the church as foreign missionaries are. As a result, our Deacons engage in collecting items for various community partners.

Nothing can be taken for granted when we realize that nothing can be done "the way it's always been done" because we no longer live in the space where we have always lived in the past. Yet one of the biggest challenges for us initially was not to just transfer the sense of "church" from the building to a new location.

The Acts of Faith Model requires us to think about WHY we do everything and HOW we should do it now in light of who God is leading us to be.

Our Current Acts of Faith



In 2014, after 165 years on Mt. Hope Avenue in Rochester, New York, South Presbyterian Church discerned that they were called to take the energy and excitement of their Spiritled congregation and move out into the community. Why expect people to come to one building for their needs to be met when Jesus went to the people; he didn't wait for them to come to him. And so South created the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry® 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. And don't worry, you don't have to get rid of your building to get out into the community and become more missional! It just happened to be what South was called to do. The AoF Model, though, calls for us to create communities

based on shared experiences and interests right where the people already are!

Cuppa the Dible

You supply the "cuppa" -

the Spirit supplies the message

Lectionary-based.

MONDAY, 10:30 a.m.



Both in-person and online groups discuss the streaming

series, The Chosen and the ways that it relates to our own spirituality.

Contact the Church Office for more information regarding days, times & links.

Positive, Progressive

Prophetic &

Pragmatic Fellowship of Faith

> Weekly worship. Music-Prayer-Preaching Sacraments - Scripture

SUNDAY, 1 p.m.

St. John's Meadows





through our love of books, ideas, and each other. Group meets weekly (zoom) and once

Building

community

a month in person while zooming.

Check Online Calendar



Prayer Service in real time

THURSDAY, 6 p.m. Contact the Church Office for

the link



Uploaded services in advance of Sunday worship.

Recorded by volunteer leaders at home and edited by our staff. "Script" is provided; 4-6 days to record your 5-minute piece. If you wish to join us,

Contact the Church Office



bread given as gifts to friends & strangers to

Homemade

say "we are with you" and are nurtured by the Spirit of Christ, the Living Bread.

Contact the Church Office

Time to socialize and be the church

at rest.



SEASONAL GATHERINGS AS POSSIBLE



Monthly Volunteering with un-housed, hungry and poor at the local Catholic Worker ministry -

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. Hands-on; Hearts engaged. Contact the Church Office



Periodic Justice-Oriented Serialized Classes on systemic racism, trans-phobia, immigration,

New Life Food Cupboard

Emergency Food support for those who need it.

2nd, 4th, and 5th THURSDAYS 9:30 a.m.- Noon

Congregation Beth Sholom (1161 Monroe Avenue, 14620) Ring for

Adult Bell Choir open to all. No prior experience

or audition

required. Vacations in summer.

WEDNESDAY, 5:30 p.m.

St. John's Meadows (1 Johnsarbor Drive, 14620)

Please check the website calendar (see reverse side) for up-to-date information. ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN U.S.

These are South's current Acts of Faith. Everyone is welcome, regardless of religious belief, faith tradition, or lack thereof. Come on ... check us out!





Brickstone Horizon Room

Limited enrollment per section Contact the Church Office



Mid-week opportunity to sing church- and non-church songs

No Audition. Vacations in summer. WEDNESDAY 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. St. John's Meadows

WORSHIP WITH US IN REAL TIME/YOUR TIME

24/7 WORSHIP on YouTube: South Church Rochester

Daily meditations with the pastor and Weekly worship services - including sacraments, singing, prayer, reflection, and scripture

Thursday Evening Prayer Service: **Zoom**

Sunday 1PM in person-Fellowship of Faith



PAUSE

Periodic Gen-Z Gatherings focused on

Sustainability of the Planet, Their Spirits and Themselves Contact the Church Office for

upcoming plans

Online Bible Study for Thinking & Questioning People.

FRIDAY, Noon to 1 p.m. Contact the Church Office for the Zoom Link



Weekly, we produce DVD's of our COMPLETE worship services for those without internet connection. eWorship Leaders record elements of the service on their phones or other devices and email them to our staff who compile and edit for upload to our YouTube Channel: South Church Rochester. That video is burned to a DVD and delivered or mailed to those who cannot attend in person.

Other churches and/or pastors are invited to arrange with us a similar mailing for your members. You decide which portions of worship you would like to record for your people. Together, this "modular approach" to worship videos can be timely and personally tailored to your community at minimal expense. Contact us if you would like to purchase DVD's or want to explore creating videos either by yourself or using our modular model.

So ... when someone asks "Where's your church?" we can literally say: "Where would you like us to be?" because we are presently in 8 neighborhoods in Rochester, Brighton, and Henrietta, at 6 different locations and ONLINE we have regular participants in five different states. And isn't that what it means to be the Body of the Risen Christ? We are a small church of only 35 official members, but our 15 Acts of Faith reached at least 341 different people in the course of this year so far. And while a small percentage participated in more than one AoF, that gave us 6,068 contact points where people "bumped up against Jesus" through us in person or on zoom in this post-COVID world! When you add our 2,433 YouTube views, there were close to 8,500 opportunities for the Spirit to work through us in touching the lives of others and sharing the Good News of Love and Acceptance.





By harnessing the Firebird Spirit, South resources and supports other transforming churches & institutions.

Professional experts from multiple disciplines and denominations provide insight through the Firebird team that works across the country sharing lessons learned and solutions pioneered by South Church and others.

Firebird Spirit, Inc. provides consulting and coaching services to individuals, churches, and judicatories.

Contact Kevin Fuller, **Director of Operations** (kfuller@firebirdspirit.org) to schedule a visit or plan a workshop in your area. (585) 476 - HOPE (4673)



We proudly say, "The Church has Left the Building" and we are quick to pray:

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



For updates, to learn more, or to contact us, please visit the website. www.SOUTHPC.org/welcome (585) 271.5078 P.O. Box 22782 | Rochester, NY 14692

Individual Acts of Faith

Cuppa the Bible

Cuppa the Bible, an Act of Faith of South Presbyterian Church, met weekly on Monday mornings at 10:30 - noon, to explore God's Word. Each week began with a time of check-in fellowship followed by discussion led by Pastor Deb. The Scripture texts were read to preview upcoming week's Lectionary emailed to participants by Pastor Deb prior to our meeting time.



This past year's gatherings were held on Zoom. Typically nine women participated in challenging and lively discussion as historical context was explored and a variety of Scripture translations were considered including the new-to-us this year *First Nations Version of the New Testament*.

In light of current local and world events, we challenged ourselves to apply our understanding of Scripture readings to our faith journeys. Discerning a common thread or theme amongst the four lectionary readings was pursued each week and we were often gifted by additional insights from our Baha'i member.

Cuppa the Bible provided new perspectives to our understanding of God's Word for us today through the Spirit's guidance, while initiating deep and thoughtful reflection from our own life experiences.

We welcome newcomers who want to deepen their connection to Spirit while expanding their understanding of Scripture. After meeting and discussion these passages, it is really exciting and amazing to see how Pastor Deb moves through those in subsequent sermons on the same readings.

Please contact the office if you would like the Zoom link to join us on Monday mornings!

Barbara, Darlene, Deb, Jane, Judy, Marion, Mary Lee, Nancy, Sally, Stena, Sue



Evening Prayer

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 Pastor Deb, seven to nine participants engaged interactively in a weekly check-in focused on a leading question, opening prayer, selected Scripture using various translations including the addition of the *First Nations Version of the New Testament*, 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 as we share in one another's faith journeys. Each week, we were able to prayerfully address the ongoing events of our lives with prayerful reflection always a part of our journey. This last year, several of us underwent significant celebrations and challenges, but sharing them with each other "in real time" helped to keep God at the center of what we were experiencing.

We all are looking forward to continuing coming together in Evening Prayer. It has become a midweek check-in with our faith community that now extends beyond Rochester even to Ithaca, NY. Together we grow with prayer-filled hope!

Avis, Barbara, Carole, Deb, Eileen, Gordon, Jane, Katherine, Linda, Mary, Sonya, Stena



eWorship and the DVD Ministry

With the onset of the pandemic, our weekly video worship service began to evolve. We have been asked several times why we didn't just "livestream" or do Facebook Live as many other churches did, but livestreaming would have meant having a place to livestream from. Without a central worship space, we would have been livestreaming from the Pastor's living room.



The same would have been true of Facebook Live as well. And a secondary consideration was our church's love of singing. There was no way to project the words and music of our hymns if we were livestreaming or using Facebook.

The solution our Session rested upon was YouTube videos where our Minister of Music and Pastor could pre-record the service so it would be available on the Sunday when it would normally have been led in person.

Over the last three years, the process has been honed so that we have close to 100 hymns already recorded (with the music and words on the screen). As interest grew, AoF members were invited to record portions of the worship service each week and now there are more than twenty eWorship Leaders who lead us through their videos of a Call to Worship, Prayer of Realignment or Scripture Reading that they record on their own device wherever they are. With our current leaders, each person records approximately once a month. A script is sent to them on Friday and the recording is due to Kevin in our office the following Monday noon. He then edits and assembles the final recording, placing text overlays atop the videos and adds smooth transitions between the individual videos from the eWorship leaders, hymns and Pastor Deb. In the last year we have had 1,200 views of our online worship services. eWorship Leaders now hail from Arizona, New Jersey, North Carolina, Utah, Washington State and New York.



But what to do when people - both local and distant - do not have internet and cannot access our YouTube service? We learned that most of those people do have DVD players. (And for those local folks who do not have a DVD player or internet access, we have purchased a few portable DVD players which we give to them.) Thus began our DVD Ministry. Weekly, after the YouTube

service has been finalized, Kevin burns DVD's of the same service and mails them to a handful of people so that they, too, can worship with us "in real time."

Currently, four or five DVD's are mailed weekly and one of them continues the ministry we began at Cobbs Hill Manor as **New Life on Monroe** where, we are told, 8-12 individuals gather weekly on Saturday morning to worship together using the DVD as their source of prayer, song, scripture and reflection. Producing 4 DVD's per week, we edited, burned and mailed over 200 DVD's in 2023.

Costs of this ministry are small but necessary, running about \$1,000/year for replacement technology, DVD purchase and mailing. If you can contribute financially, or if you would like to learn more about becoming an eWorship leader in the comfort of your home, please call or email the office (585-271/5078 | office@southpc.org).

Current eWorship Leaders include: Andy Pratt, Barb Sixbey, Barbara Durfee, Carly Logan, Carol Santos, Coriander Wolghsng Rainbeaux, Deb Swift, Eileen Smith, Holly Powell, Jacques Kouevi, John Hanna, Karen Thomas, Linda Bryson, Martha Moler, Mary Lee Miller, Nancy Rice, Norma Carter, Paul Morris, Sonya Kennedy, Susan Orr, Susan Riblett, Tom Sanderson.

Fellowship of Faith

Although all of our Acts of Faith are forms of worship for their participants, our traditional Presbyterian worship service is found on Sunday afternoons at St. John's Meadows when Fellowship of Faith meets weekly. With preaching and prayer, scripture and singing, sacraments and fellowship, this AoF has been recognized by the 1001 New Worship Community initiative of the PC(USA).



One of the first things noticed when one walks into FoF worship is that we are a bunch of singers! Whether it's belting out an "oldie but goodie" or learning to love some of the new church music being written, Fellowship of Faith sings with gusto.

Pastor Appreciation Day



Another thing that visitors comment on is the depth of our prayer life. Each week we include prayer requests for individuals lifted up by those attending. At first glance we may not seem to be "church" in the traditional sense (although our order of worship is quite traditional) but we are definitely a "faith community" that loves and cares for each other inside and outside of our hourly worship on Sundays at 1PM.

Currently, approximately 30 people gather weekly, though over the course of the year there have been more than 70 different individuals who have praised God together in the Parks

Room of Chestnut Court. On holidays we can number over 50! Attendees include Meadows/Brickston residents as well as neighbors. Approximately one-quarter to one-third of the worshiping community were originally members of South Church who made the move out of the building ten years ago. The rest are new to us, helping us to become a New Worshiping Community.



Thanks to **John Hust** and the Meadows staff, the chairs are ready for us, the piano is front and center, the new communion table is positioned with Stena Rickner table cloths and paraments atop, the cross and Bible remind us of why we are there, and our banners have come to replace the traditional role of stained glass windows with their colorful messages.



From September through June, leadership is shared by the Pastor, Sing for Joy!, and punctuated by appearances of Ring for Joy!, our Dulcimer Duet of Barbara Durfee and Holly Powell, and the presence of our Living Bread Ministry. In addition, the Deacons and Food Cupboard use FoF as a collection point for our many collections of food, Christmas gifts, school supplies, etc. that we share with community partners. Additionally this year we were graced by the presence of young cellist Dylan Bachmann, and a

visiting saxophone quartet as musical quests.

This year, we took in three new members to South, two of whom - Sally Lake and Holly Powell - worship with us at Fellowship of Faith. The third, Coriander Rainbeaux, joined through our online worship service, but occasionally joins us in-person, as well. And there were two other changes that took place this year as we replaced our traditional candles with flickering LED candles per

regulations of our host site and we retired the very large and difficult-to-move communion table that had been part of the original South Church when we moved 10 years ago. It has been replaced now by a smaller, more mobile version.

Every week, members of the congregation are invited to serve as liturgists by leading the congregation in various portions of the service. Those are all determined at the beginning of worship each week.



But one thing makes this AoF unique among the others: it is the location where most of our giving and tithing occurs. This faithful little group supports all of the Acts of Faith along with a handful of contributors who belong to the other AoF's, but we recognize that not everyone who is touched by our missional model is able or equipped to give financially. We always seek prayerful support regardless of someone's giving ability. This year is the first that we have

been able to live entirely on what we took in during the year and that is due, in large part, to the generosity of FoF. And when our newest Act of Faith, Soul Sustainability, was denied a start-up grant by the Presbytery, people at FoF raised more than twice the amount of the grant through their special giving initiative in only three or four weeks!

We have been graced this year to have had guest preachers: Elders Mary Lee Miller, Susan Riblett, and Revs. Jane Watt and Ray Jones from the national headquarters who was here to celebrate the beginning of our 175th Anniversary in September, and in August, our Deacons wrote, prepared and led our service.

All in all, we are grateful to God for this chance to worship together in such a beautiful setting that is neither cold in the winter nor hot in the summer, with windows to the world, along withengaging preaching and uplifting music every single week!



















Food for Thought



We continue to be part of the Zooming community since it has been so comfortable to meet and not have to travel. Sometimes we check in on our phones! Friday at 3 p.m. was the timeslot chosen for 2023 but it has limited participation, so we have reevaluated.

The year opened with a fun little romp with *HOW THE PENGUINS SAVED VERONICA* by Hazel Prior. An isolated older woman forges ahead with her

plan to visit Antarctica uninvited, becomes a problem and blessing to the research crew, gives her heart to an orphaned penguin and reunites with her nephew, Patrick. At every turn there were great discussion opportunities.

From February to April, we meandered through the *ANTHROPOCENE REVIEWED* by John Green, easily seeing grace in the essays and finding ourselves in chapters entitled Geese, Teddy, Decathlon, Whispering, Goats and much more. We thank David E. for his suggestion and participation.

In May we dug into the dirt, reading together *SOIL AND SACRAMENT*, A Spiritual Memoir by Fred Bahnson who is a seeker of wisdom, left his wife home while he worked and researched the communities of organic farming groups, many led by clergy or spiritual guides. He finds sacredness in working the soil, patiently waiting for seed to germinate and grow, feeling grief when a crop is lost. The themes were repetitive and relatable and made us itch to start a garden, or at least pot a tomato.

We took the summer off and returned in September to discuss a timely topic, *TALKING TO STRANGERS* by Malcolm Gladwell. How often do we prejudge a person based on superficial characteristics? How often does this impact the quality of our interactions? Would we easily be duped by being more open to those we meet?

WHEN I AM AN OLD WOMAN I SHALL WEAR PURPLE by Sandra Martz closed out our year, a thoughtful book of essays and poems with which most in the group could empathize or sympathize depending on current age/physical limitations. Photos of aged beauty, wrinkly laughter, sorrowful pensiveness reminded us that our true essence is not our physical body. We are so much more than the wrapper we came in. While we remain a group mostly of women, men would certainly appreciate the emotions shared and the stories told.

2024 will find us back in the Zoom room at 3 p.m., but returning now to WEDNESDAYS! Join us at any time! We have good discussions even when we read the wrong chapters!

We welcomed one newcomer, *David*, during the year. We had an average of six persons at the Zoom room or table. We met weekly but not during holidays or summer, approximately 40 times.





Living Bread

... Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." ~ John 6:35



The Living Bread Ministry has given 1-2 loaves of bread weekly to friends in our church family and the wider community as a loving gesture of encouragement, welcome and celebration. That amounts to approximately 80 loaves of bread for attendees of Fellowship of Faith to either take home themselves, or take and deliver



to others, including the volunteers who greet us at the Meadows each week.

Each loaf is wrapped in a new kitchen towel, which serves as a lasting remembrance and gift of this outreach after the bread has been eaten.

Eileen Smith and I express our deepest gratitude for everyone who has contributed to this ministry by providing supplies, suggesting names of recipients and delivering bread.

On occasion, other members also provide a loaf of home-made bread as well. If you would like to join us in baking bread, we welcome you to do so!

We look forward to continuing this outreach in 2024 and blessing many friends in our community with the gift of freshly-baked bread, in the name of our "Lord" a word which literally means the "Keeper of the Loaf."

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Powell

Senior Spirituality

This spring, at the initiative of Pastor Deborah Swift, a group of "Women of a Certain Age" gathered to explore what the dimensions of spirituality may be at an older age. We used the book, *The Gift of Years*, by Joan Chittister, as a jumping off point.

The discussions were very fruitful, so the group decided to continue in the fall.



We have been discussing ideas and experiences generated by the book *Happiness Is a Choice You Make*, by John Leland. It is based on a series of interviews he conducted with a group of "the oldest old" whom he found in the New York City area. His learnings offer a lovely and lively jumping off place for our own experiences and thoughts.

We plan to resume our meetings after the New Year, continuing with the same book.

Nancy Rice

Love-Joy Fellowship

Love-Joy is what we call our times when we gather socially. This year, our Spring Potluck was held in March at the Brighton Town Park's Carmen Clark Lodge - an opportunity to share time with our brothers and sisters from Irondequoit Presbyterian Church. And our second Love-Joy event was part of the Gala Weekend in September. Whenever and Wherever we get together is a time filled with laughter, love and good food!



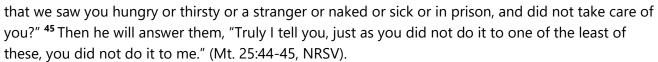


Matthew 25

One Sunday a month, our Matthew 25 Act of Faith meets at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality - part of the Catholic Worker movement - to socialize and provide meals for those without homes. Three of us take turns being present. This year, one of them wrote:

"As always, my heart is there for the people in need and for all the wonderful volunteers.

Matthew 25 is an initiative of the PC(USA) based on scripture: ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it



One memory from this year that stood out was when a mother and daughter had difficult times and St. Joe's was able to help them. They were very thankful for that help and came back to volunteer".



In addition to the women's presence, our Fellowship of Faith community collected generous donations throughout the year to help meet the needs of those coming to us for food.

We want to say thank you for all who support this ministry and we would welcome anyone who might like to join us on a Sunday. (We are generally finished in time to attend Fellowship of Faith afterwards.) Please see one of us if you have any questions or would like to volunteer. You do not need to be a member of South or any other AoF in order to join us once a month.

Judy Wandtke, Holly Powell and Marion Coger



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, and more upon request. We are usually open the 2nd ,4th , and 5th Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to noon. It is located at the back of

Congregation Beth Sholom (Upper Monroe Neighborhood), who supports us with generous rent free space.

Our service made a dramatic improvement this summer, when Foodlink matched us up with Tops for weekly donations through the food rescue program at Feeding



America. These donations include shelf stable foods, usually

miscellaneous items. When refrigerator space permits, we also accept frozen and refrigerated foods. This enables us to offer dairy, bread, and frozen items as never before. Our clients are thrilled to choose unlimited amounts of perishables. This is a good help in light of increased demand for food and decreased grant funding to support our program.

We served 84 different people including 23 children and 11 seniors. This is a 67% increase over last year. Each household chooses the number of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and grains according to quantities established by Foodlink by household size. We also offer choices of beverages, soups, miscellaneous food items, personal care items, and knitted items beyond Foodlink's recommendations.

Each household is eligible to come once a month. We averaged 6 visitors and 2 volunteers each of the 28 times we were open. With repeat visits for 3 meals a day, 3 day supplies, and holiday dinners wish list items, this accumulated to 4,075 meals provided in 2023, a 57% increase over 2022!

Each visitor has unique needs, and we try to meet those. A man living in his van, was provided with gallons of bottled water. A man who collects bottles and cans was provided with warm mittens, and a bald lady with a hat. Our clients are appreciative and creative. Homeless people, of course, do not cook, but some in homes, don't have working ovens, so one borrowed her neighbor's

crockpot to cook her holiday meals. Many do not have transportation, so we occasionally deliver.



Our food comes from four main sources: our Foodlink membership (which includes food covered by USDA grants, and NYS HPNAP grants), from our New Life Food Cupboard Fund, Tops, and from our generous members and friends of South Presbyterian Church and Congregation Beth Sholom. Many thanks to our friends for more supplies this holiday season.

Our workforce came from our two steadfast volunteers: Janis Castrogiovanni and John Hust. Connie Izzo substituted a few times, and Judy Wandtke joined us as a monthly shopper. We continue to support Congregation Beth Sholom's Nechie's Food cupboard, a posted cupboard in the front yard for passers-by to take or donate canned items. We welcome new volunteers for however often you can commit to help.

One visitor declared "The Lord will provide!", another "God is good!". Yes, we are privileged to be the Lord's servants.



Food Cupboard at Jewish Temple article in *Talker of the Town*

Respectfully submitted by, Janis Castrogiovanni



Ring for Joy!



The Ring for Joy! Handbell Choir, now in its third year, has rehearsed weekly and shared musical offerings in Fellowship of Faith six times during the year - often performing more than once in each worship service. We welcomed *Donna Gates* to the choir this year, and continued to be blessed with *Norma Carter* and *Deb Swift* as "per diem" ringers, always willing to step in when needed!

Rehearsing Wednesday evenings at 5:30 p.m.in the Parks Room at Chestnut Court of St. John's Meadows, this group is made up of volunteers. No audition is necessary and, although prior ringing is helpful, it is not necessary for membership.

Bell ringing not only helps to keep eye-hand coordination strong, but it also provides a group experience where every member is needed. The camaraderie that develops among the ringers often carries over beyond the bell choir experience.

If you would like to join us, come by most Wednesday nights during the program year. (You will be able to hear us if we are in session!) Most recently one of our members did just that, stopping by to listen and eventually, joining us in ringing.

It's a lot of fun!

My deepest thanks to our wonderful ringers this year: Mary Taglieri, Donna Gates, Carole Knight, Mary Lee Miller, Nancy Rice, John Hust, Richard Taglieri, Eileen Smith and Sandi Thomas.

We look forward to a wonderful new year of growing together musically and ringing to the glory of God!





Respectfully Submitted, Holly Powell





Sing for Joy!

After several years of adjustments and innovations, 2023 was blissfully "normal" for the South Church choir! In the Fall of 2022, we flip-flopped Wednesday rehearsals times with Ring For Joy!,

so that Sing For Joy! now meets from 5:30-6:30 pm, with bells following most weeks. This arrangement proved successful and has continued to the present. Rehearsals take place in the Parks Room at Chestnut Court.

In 2023 we began our customary summer vacation towards the end of June, resuming after Labor Day in September. Even during the summer, our members attend Sunday's Fellowship of Faith as often as possible and lead the singing with gusto!

Wednesday rehearsals begin with 15-20 minutes of a hymn-sing, with members selecting their favorite hymns or whatever is on

our hearts. We then fill the rest of our hour with work on our two-, three-, and four-part choral repertoire for presentation during Sunday worship services. We also meet about 30 minutes prior to Sunday afternoon's Fellowship of Faith for a quick review of our music for the day. The Choir typically presents a Choral Anthem, as well as a short Introit and Choral Response as musical

bookends to the Sunday service.



With the recent combination of the South Church choral music library (which historically has incorporated both the Calvary St. Andrews and New Life choral libraries when those churches dissolved) and the Gates Presbyterian library, we continue to be able to select repertoire that is sometimes familiar, sometimes new, and always meaningful. Members frequently remark on the high quality of the music we sing...and their leader frequently

remarks on the high quality of the singing!

On December 20, prior to our regular Wednesday evening meeting, Sing For Joy! paid a visit down the hall to longtime members Gordon and Stena Rickner, on the occasion of their move to the Meadows. Pastor Deb led a short service with scripture, prayer, and singing to bless the Rickners and their new home!

Sing For Joy! currently comprises twelve members: Sue Bovay, Amy Doty, John Hust, Carole Knight, Mary Lee Miller, Holly Powell, Andy Pratt, Fran Ratcliffe, Nancy Rice, Gordon Rickner,

Stena Rickner, and Mary Taglieri. St. John's residents often drop in to listen to our in-person rehearsals, and sometimes even join in the singing!

New members are always welcome (no audition required), and, when necessary, our Zoom hymn-sings are available to anyone with the link and password.

Andy Pratt, Minister of Music



Soul Sustainability

Last summer, the Session realized that we have 3 members (about 10% of our official PCUSA

membership) who are in their twenties and who, in keeping with national data, are not very involved in church anymore. The decision was made to invite them and their friends to create their own Act of Faith. Over pizza and wings, these GenZ-ers (those born in or after 1997) birthed Soul Sustainability.

By their definition, Soul Sustainability is a social group of 20-somethings working for sustainability of the environment, their Spirit, and themselves by creating a safe place to define their faith community as they need it to be.

With a goal of meeting in person a handful of times a year, they list their Intentions to:

Assist one another in the evolution and growth of our souls here on planet Earth through the acquisition of knowledge and experience.



As young adults working to establish themselves in the world, they meet when it is convenient. The one charge from the Session is that they spend at least a few moments reflecting on the Spirit while together.

Using a shared leadership model, their initial questions were impressive: Who do we report to? How often do we meet? What kind of administrative structure do we need to develop? The freedom of the AoF Model to create their own structure proved to be inviting to them and one of their members (a SOTA art graduate) created their logo to reflect new life coming growing from that which is dying away. As young adults of color they say they find

support in just being together.

After meeting to work out "how" to structure the group, they did a day-hike together in Canandaigua, adding a couple of other GenZ-ers to their number for that activity and in September

they were actively involved in South's Gala Celebration where they made contact with Rev. Laurel Nelson who administers a personalized Respite & Renewal Experience outside of Dansville, NY. Plans are for SoulSus to go on retreat there in the spring of 2024.

Through a modest funding request put out to the AoF Community, they received \$1,200 which allows them to pay for activities that might otherwise challenge the budgets of those just entering the workforce. Some of their proposed activities reflecting their concerns and interests include a Nature Survival Course, attending the Planetarium, sharing a Beach Day, engaging in

Injury or a C Sale Control of the Co

Initial Meeting of SoulSus

Community Outreach and working their way through a book list that they are creating.

Of the five founding members of Soul Sustainability, one has completed their Master's at the University of Rochester, another has their Bachelor's degree from the UR, another has their Bachelor's degree from Ithaca College, two have graduated from Finger Lakes Community College,

Hiking in Canandaigua



and one of those is pursuing their Bachelor's degree from Empire State College while the other is planning their return to academia while working full time. All are in professional fields which makes meeting up a challenge, but each is excited over the possibilities of finding mutual support through this AoF.

Also in keeping with national trends, however, members of SoulSus are not thrilled with the word "church" being associated with their group. Once again, South is at the forefront of "redefining church" by supporting and encouraging them to make this group whatever it is that they need it to be to enhance their Spirit.

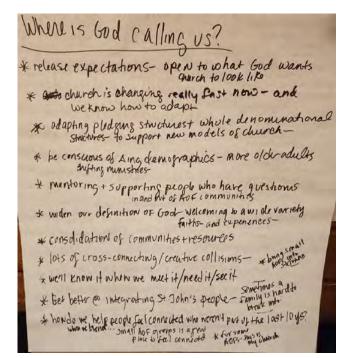
Current Members: Carly Logan, Concetta Robinson, Enuma Okafor, Imani Gunner, and Jacques Kouevi

Results of the AoF Potluck during the Gala Celebration.

What have we Learned in the Last 10 Years?

What have we leaved? *We can be gutsy *We don't reed a *We can be gutsy * Duilding * We can be gutsy * Duilding * We can be faces people through congregations and Acts of Farm - people get to bump * We carred how to zoom/ken Into Josus through us. * Video is cordinap - include those who more away. * you can't always get what you want/get what you * you can't always get what you want/get what you * We were way ahold of digital age - tendy for it. * Cod wants us here / listen to the Spirit / ability & feel direction * the community has accepted us * get by the doubters * there is prancial stress/model in progress/ partners have belowd * doesn't need to be paster lid * now people/young families not coming |

Where is God Calling Us Now?



Water from the Well



It is the water from the well that is cold and refreshing regardless of the weather outside. So it is with our Friday in-depth Bible Study, Water from the Well.

Meeting by Zoom for 75 minutes every week, we have created our "church community" with people signing on from New Jersey, Utah, Washington State, various parts of New York and during the winter season, from Texas, Nevada, Florida or other vacation spots. With only three attendees who are members of South Presbyterian, this group has become both a national group and an inter-faith one. It is exciting to hear the perspectives and insights brought by those with

different life experiences.

This year we concluded our 18-month focus on the Book of Acts, learning more about Paul's 30-year mission than any of us had known before.

Because of our August hiatus, we decided to do a short six-week class on Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. Many in the group had never been exposed to some of Borg's concepts and the historical-critical method of looking at who wrote the books, to whom they were written, and the context in which they were written. It brought new members to our Well group.

Once the fall arrived, we launched into our next big topic: the Gospel according to John which we began in September.

Using study guides compiled by Pastor Deb, each week is a deep dive into the Gospel and its meaning after a 15-20-minute check-in time for sharing personal events, thoughts, and community building..

We welcome new members at any time. Many in the class consider this to be a vital piece of their faith experience every week.

Amy, Barb, Beth, Charlotte, Darlene, Deb, Diane, Eileen, JoMae, Martha, Paul, Susan (Picture taken during the summer Borg group. Not all current members pictured.)



Firebird Spirit

Unique among all of our Acts of Faith is Firebird Spirit which began as our educational outreach AoF but has since morphed into being its own independent 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. It's purpose? To shepherd others and walk with them on their own transformational journeys.

We have many insights and experiences to share after ten years and we have assembled an amazing Firebird Team.

Currently, our Firebird Team consists of the following with their areas of expertise noted:

Amy Williams Fowler Ordained PC(USA) Presbytery Leader, HR Spiritual Direction (Ashland, Massachusetts)

Stephen Longley Ordained UCC Marketing, Advertising, Business (Dorset, Vermont)

Executive Director
Deborah Fae Swift (Sec)
Ordained PC(USA)
Education, Training,
ICF Coaching
(Rochester, New York)

Operations Director Kevin J Fuller (Treas) IT, Marketing, Office Consolidation (Webster, New York)

Rachel A. McGuire (VP) Ordained ABC-USA Online Community Development (Rochester, New York)

President of the Board Karen J. Thomas (Pres) Ordained Ruling Elder PCUSA) Business, Team Leadership (Marana, Arizona) Sonya Kennedy Ordained Ruling Elder PC(USA) Lay Leadership Development (Greensboro, North Carolina)

Barbara Sixbey Ordained Ruling Elder PC(USA) Program Development, Evangelism (Rochester, New York)

We are now able to offer Spiritual Direction and Coaching to our clients through our team and their networks.

Firebird's work in 2023 centered around local presentations to churches within the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, and fielding phone calls from around the country when people are referred to us from national church personnel.

Firebird is drawing up plans for a redefinition of its role in 2024 and is beginning its year by working with a church in western Pennsylvania.

Although the company has limited finances, it pays half of South's office rent payment every month and has purchased some of the computer equipment used by both organizations.

Contributions can be made to Firebird Spirit:

- via Sunday offerings at Fellowship of Faith,
- by mailing your gift to the South office, or
- online through South's website (just click on the GIVING tab and then select Firebird Spirit from the drop-down menu).



All contributions are tax deductible.

SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK

Session

"As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and they are eligible for any office."

~ Book of Order, G-2.0301

Our Session truly embodies these standards for leadership in the church. Comprised of our Ruling Elders and the Pastor, we hold ten regular meetings (monthly except for December and one of the summer months) and special meetings, as needed.

Every part of the church from its finances to its ministry focus is the responsibility of the Session. In our case, one thing we do is a quarterly review of every Act of Faith, determining whether it is still generating energy and excitement, our criterion for continuing a ministry or dissolving it.

Additionally, it is the Session's responsibility to create and adopt the budget for the coming year and to oversee the Deacons and all committees with the exception of the Nominations Committee.

Our Session is "a praying bunch" and begins every meeting with a period of meditation and centering. It is not uncommon to pause in the middle of a meeting in order to offer up a prayer for our business.

In 2023 we had only five out of a possible six Ruling Elders serving because they were the ones who felt called to serve at this time in their life and this time in the life of the faith community. All are returning in 2024 and another member has come forward, feeling called to serve. The slate of officers will be voted on at our Annual Meeting.

To show the importance of prayer, however, we want you to know that Pastor Deb had been praying about Elders who might feel called to serve, as had the Elder members. Both arrived at the same name through their prayerful discernment. When the Pastor was sharing this with the individual, she interrupted and said, "Yes."

"Yes, what?" asked Pastor Deb.

"You're going to ask me if I want to serve on the Session. Right?" Deb nodded. "Well I realized in prayer recently that I'm supposed to serve again, so yes. I'll come back on."

This is the power of prayer as the Session experiences it on a regular basis. We are grateful for the camaraderie given to us by the Spirit and for the guidance we receive from God all the time.

This year's Session has been: Deb Swift (Moderator), John Hust, Karen Thomas, Mary Lee Miller, Nancy Rice, and Sonya Kennedy (Clerk of Session)

SPC Session



Deacons

"The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness and service, sharing 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." Book of Order

Being Deacons without centralized worship means that they cover a wide range of Acts of Faith involvement, but even then, individual AoF's often care for their own members when a need arises. In 2023, the Board of Deacons, as a whole, has been active in outreach to our church family and community neighbors through regular in-person and phone visits, the card ministry (birthdays, get well, holidays) and various food/item drives.

We ended 2022 by collecting money for a **Burlington Coat Factory gift card** for an Afghan family who regularly uses the Food Cupboard. And then, in January we partnered with the Meadows to support a **mittens/gloves/socks drive** and requested **soup and cereal for the New Life Food Cupboard** in the tradition of New Life's Cereal Bowl Sunday and South's Souper Bowl Sunday on Super Bowl Sunday.

Friends and family were blessed by the gift of chocolate covered pretzels in February and St. Joe's House of Hospitality received personal items from our month-long drive in March.



In April we sent Easter cards and notes of encouragement and in May we celebrated the beautiful lilac season by sending vintage lilac postcards to church family while also collecting kitchen items for Hope Lodge (American Cancer Society).

During the month of June we sent Father's Day cards and collected **personal hygiene items** for Hope Lodge. In August we **led worship one Sunday** when Pastor Deb was on vacation and **assisted in the 175th anniversary celebration** of South Church in September.

Gifts for Cameron Families

Our "Each One, Reach One" outreach ministry continued in October with the sending of cards to St. John's Meadows' residents and Thanksgiving cards to church family in November.

In November we also coordinated Christmas gifts for Cameron
Community families in the Lyell-Otis Neighborhood of Rochester, and
in December delivered hand-crafted heart ornaments (thank you, Barbara!) and sent
Christmas cards to our members who find it a challenge to leave home.

In addition to these mission opportunities, we have prepared the communion elements monthly for Fellowship of Faith worship services.

We meet monthly to plan outreach ministries, share devotionals and share prayer needs in our church family and community. I am deeply grateful and honored to serve currently with *Barbara Durfee, Mary Taglieri, Sue Bovay, Jan Holbrook and Judy Wandtke*, and with joy and excitement look forward to seeing where God will lead us in the coming year and what new ministries await! Our prayer continues as this new year dawns, "Put us where you want us, God, and show us what to do."

In Christ's Love, Holly Powell, Co-Convener

Nominating Committee (NomCom)

While other committees and initiatives are overseen by the Session, the Nominating Committee is not. This committee is directly elected by the congregation and reports back to them, being the only one bypassing the Session concerning the important matter of church leadership.

That being said, by the time of the annual meeting of SPC in February 2024, we will have come together to review the leadership offices for the church. After taking note of any vacancies to fill, we follow up on those people who have been prayerfully discerning their call to leadership in our congregation. Unlike some other churches, we do not just "fill in the blanks" in order to have a maximum number of Deacons and Elders on board. We would rather operate with vacancies on our team of people who truly feel called to serve than to fill in names because someone feels "obligated to help out."

After an initial meeting to survey the needs for the coming year, NomCom members contact those who are presently serving a term on the board of Deacons and Session to confirm their willingness to continue, and others who have expressed an interest (either through conversation with Pastor Deb or one of us) to explore serving.

This year, there will be only a few changes needed for 2024. We have 6 Deacons (Partners in Ministry) who complement the work of Pastor Deb in a very active way. Five Session members will continue their work and add one more, deciding policy, planning the future and approving the budget.

The NomCom is always open to adding to the number of SPC members serving on either of these two boards as many hands make light work and the more voices heard the more inclusive and meaningful our work as a church will be!

Much gratitude and thanks to the members of this committee for their discernment in putting together the slate of officers for the upcoming year.

John Hust, NomCom chair

MOTION: Madame moderator, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, I present the following slate of officers to serve as the leadership of South Presbyterian Church. (Please see the following page)



2024 Leadership of South Presbyterian Church

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 denotes the final year of their term. Newly elected officers begin their terms at their Service of Ordination and Installation following their election and examination by the sitting Session. Those in <u>bold underlined</u> are the slate to be voted on at the 2024 Annual Meeting. Unless noted, each of these people has been previously ordained.

Session

Sonya Kennedy, Clerk of Session

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026
Karen Thomas (1)	Mary Lee Miller (2)	Barbara Sixbey (1)
John Hust (2) (5 years total)	Nancy Rice (2)	
	Sonya Kennedy (1)	

Deacons & Partners in Ministry

Barbara Durfee and Holly Powell, Co-Convenors of the Deacons

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	
	Judy Wandtke (2)	Mary Taglieri (2)
		(completed 1-year term and now
		beginning 3-year term)
	Barbara Durfee (2)	Holly Powell (1)*
	Jan Holbrook (2)	Coriander Rainbeaux (1)
	(completed 3-year term and now	
	beginning 2-year term)	

^{*} To be ordained pending election and examination by the Session

Partners in Ministry are those who serve but, for one reason or another, are not PC(USA) members of South and therefore not eligible for Deacon ordination.

Corporation Officers

President John Hust (annually renewable)

Secretary Sonya Kennedy Treasurer Nancy Rice The Session elects the Clerk of Session and Treasurer who serve as the Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, of the Corporation. The Congregation elects the President at the Annual Meeting.

<u>2024 Nominating Committee</u> (1representative each of Session and Deacons who will elect their own representatives, and 3 at-large members of the congregation to be elected at the Annual Meeting)

Session: Deacons:

At-Large Members: 1. 2. 3.

Pastor

Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, Moderator of Session

Staff

Without a building to support, our largest expenditure is our staff. However, given the creative demands placed on them as we develop new ways of being church in the 21st century, we are blessed to have the amazing quartet that God has led to work here.

Pastor Deb Swift is in the middle of her 16th year with us and has consolidated her responsibilities so that she is able to meet the needs of our "wee kirk" at a quarter-time employment. Dividing her work between South and Irondequoit allows both congregations to work with her.





Director of Operations Kevin Fuller has been with South for over a decade. In addition to

serving as an officer of Firebird Spirit, Irondequoit Presbyterian Church has covenanted with South to provide them with their office secretarial coverage through Kevin. He works mornings (M-TH) in the IPC office and afternoons (M-TH) in the South office. As with the pastor, the costs for Kevin's time are pro-rated to the time he works for each church.

It would be nearly impossible to do what we do as an Acts of Faith Community without Kevin's faithful involvement. Whether attending to technology details, marketing, preparing our weekly bulletins, serving as our bookkeeper, editing our online services, creating the DVD's for weekly distribution, supporting the pastor in planning and leading the congregation's programming, or answering individual members' questions (everything from how to save video files to the best way of contacting someone) Kevin is the go-to person. His personality, sincere compassion, and vast knowledge across many subject areas, make him a vital member of our staff.

Minister of Music Andy Pratt is our music coordinator. While leading Sing for Joy! rehearsals, conducting them in their three pieces every Sunday (Choral Introit, Anthem and Benediction Response), inviting passers-by to join in the weekly hymn-sing on Wednesday evenings, or delighting the congregation with his Preludes and Postludes, Andy's leadership in our community is a gift. Because of his other positions (as a church musician at Gates Presbyterian Church, the Music Director for Black Friars Theater, or occasional commitments to his full-time





teaching position at Aquinas High School) we occasionally are treated to substitute keyboard artists and conductors. Most notably in 2023 those were Chip Bachmann and Kathy Thomas for whom we are also very grateful.

Ring for Joy Director Holly Powell not only founded our fledgling bell choir but conducts weekly rehearsals, preparing the group to join in worship leadership every six to eight weeks. We are so grateful for this volunteer effort by one of our members and thankful for her ministry of inclusion, excitement and joy that she brings to both

bell choir members and worshipers together.

Deb, Kevin, Andy, and Holly ... we are richly blessed!

FINANCES

Treasurer's Reflections



For the last twenty years (at least), South Presbyterian has operated in the red when it came to our general expenses. With the sale of our property in 2014, we knew we had enough money to live off the proceeds for seven years. This would have been a longer period if we hadn't needed to call a full time Associate Pastor for three years, but the Session took that risk in order for our Pastor to work with staff and develop a long-range sustainability plan.

In early 2023, the annual budget for South Presbyterian Church was approved, projecting an income of \$142,860.00 and expenses of \$145,495.63, for a deficit of \$-2211.11. Since our assets as of the end of 2023 are only around \$32,000, this loss would not be a happy state of affairs, yet the Session believed that 2023 would be a balanced budget for the first time in memorable history.

It had to be. We had no money left as a safety cushion from the sale of the property.

The GOOD news is that, as of 12/31/23, we did NOT incur a deficit for 2023, but, with the dedication of our friends and members, we actually posted a surplus of \$3,595.00 in our income over our expenses!

What we had originally thought would be a seven-year runway for our finances is now beginning its **TENTH** YEAR and our first at operating on a balanced budget. This ensures still another year of our ministry and mission, both at St. John's and in the community!

We are DEEPLY grateful to you, our members and friends, for your constant and dedicated support, and we offer our special thanks to Elder Karen Thomas and Director of Operations, Kevin Fuller who both provided helpful insights and guidance from their experience in this field.

With the continuation of that love and support, we look forward to another year of witness to God's love, through our Acts of Faith - wherever they are, near or far, in-person or online.

Thank you!

C SARKANDAR CHI PRATTYAL

Nancy Rice, *Treasurer* Deb Swift, *Pastor*



South Presbyterian Church

Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2023

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1110 Checking, CNB	31,985.04
1120 Petty Cash	6.00
Total Bank Accounts	\$31,991.04
Other Current Assets	
1310 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Income	0.00
1320 New Covenant Fund-Balanced Growth	0.00
1330 New Covenant Income Fund	0.00
1340 New Covenant Hermes Treasury Obligations	0.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total Current Assets	\$31,991.04
TOTAL ASSETS	\$31,991.04
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2400 Pass Through Funds	-1,434.93
2420 Firebird Spirit	1,705.54
Total 2400 Pass Through Funds	270.61
2500 Pass Through Offerings	
2510 One Great Hour of Sharing	240.00
2520 Peacemaking	475.00
2530 Christmas Joy	135.00
2540 Disaster Relief	150.00
2560 Pentecost Offering	105.00
Total 2500 Pass Through Offerings	1,105.00
2600 Prepaid Pledges	0.00
2700 Employee Retained Cash	
2710 Pastor Accrued Benefit	0.00
2720 HRA - Deb Swift	0.00
Total 2700 Employee Retained Cash	0.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$1,375.61
Total Current Liabilities	\$1,375.61
Long-Term Liabilities	
2800 Grants, General	
2810 Genesee Valley Presbytery Grant Fund	478.48
Total 2800 Grants, General	478.48
2850 Acts of Faith Funds	
2851 Soul Sustainability - Youth	1,042.47
2870 New Life Food Cupboard Fund	2,856.95

Committee Charles and Charles	TOTAL
Total 2850 Acts of Faith Funds	3,899.42
2960 Hope Fund	2,587.41
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$6,965.31
Total Liabilities	\$8,340.92
Equity	
3100 Opening Balance Equity	159,472.43
3200 Retained Earnings	-139,421.30
Net Income	3,598.99
Total Equity	\$23,650.12
OTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$31,991.04



South Presbyterian Church

Budget vs. Actuals: 2023 Approved Budget - FY23 P&L January - December 2023

	TOTAL			
A. T. L.	ACTUAL	BUDGET	REMAINING	% OF BUDGET
Income	7.00		1.107	
4100 Per Capita Contributions	1,180.00	500.00	-680.00	236.00 %
4200 Worship Collections				
4210 Pledge Income	71,099.30	72,000.00	900.70	98.75 %
4220 Pledgers' Additional Giving	12,275.00	600.00	-11,675.00	2,045.83 %
4230 Non-Pledgers & Misc	4,989.20	8,000.00	3,010.80	62.37 %
Total 4200 Worship Collections	88,363.50	80,600.00	-7,763.50	109.63 %
4300 Earned Income				
4380 Payroll Offsets/Reimbursements		0.00	0.00	
4380.1 IPC Pastor Offset	49,758.24	49,760.00	1.76	100.00 %
4380.2 IPC Admin Offset	12,000.00	12,000.00	0.00	100.00 %
Total 4380 Payroll Offsets/Reimbursements	61,758.24	61,760.00	1.76	100.00 %
Total 4300 Earned Income	61,758.24	61,760.00	1.76	100.00 %
Total Income	\$151,301.74	\$142,860.00	\$-8,441.74	105.91 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$151,301.74	\$142,860.00	\$ -8,441.74	105.91 %
Expenses				
5100 Pastor				
5110 Cash Salary, Pastor	23,183.36	23,183.00	-0.36	100.00 %
5120 Housing, Pastor	21,999.90	22,000.00	0.10	100.00 %
5140 SECA, Pastor	3,685.06	3,627.17	-57.89	101.60 %
5150 Board of Pensions, Pastor	18,608.49	18,491.46	-117.03	100.63 %
5160 Professional & Travel Expenses, Pastor	4,228.32	3,500.00	-728.32	120.81 %
5170 Continuing Education, Pastor	1,864.75	1,500.00	-364.75	124.32 %
Total 5100 Pastor	73,569.88	72,301.63	-1,268.25	101.75 %
5300 Employees				
5310 Wages, Minister of Music	15,421.31	15,500.00	78.69	99.49 %
5320 Wages, Administration	29,846.70	30,000.00	153.30	99.49 %
Total 5300 Employees	45,268.01	45,500.00	231.99	99.49 %
5400 Employer Expenses				
5410 Payroll Taxes	3,339.45	3,000.00	-339.45	111.32 9
5420 Worker's Compensation/Disability	-147.14	1,200.00	1,347.14	-12.26 %
5430 Staff/Volunteer/Leadership Appreciation	300.00	300.00	0.00	100.00 %
5440 SPC Retirement Contributions	6,000.02	6,000.00	-0.02	100.00 %
Total 5400 Employer Expenses	9,492.33	10,500.00	1,007.67	90.40 %
5500 Professional Services				
5520 Music Supply	950.00	600.00	-350.00	158.33 %
5560 Contracted Services		0.00	0.00	
5560.1 Payroll Service	1,111.67	1,200.00	88.33	92.64 %
Total 5560 Contracted Services	1,111.67	1,200.00	88.33	92.64 %

	TOTAL			
Teach Too Ing or Teach	ACTUAL	BUDGET	REMAINING	% OF BUDGE
Total 5500 Professional Services	2,061.67	1,800.00	-261.67	114.54 %
5600 PCUSA & Mission				
5610 Per Capita	1,531.00	1,530.00	-1.00	100.07 %
5620 PCUSA Mission Pledge	700.00	700.00	0.00	100.00 %
Total 5600 PCUSA & Mission	2,231.00	2,230.00	-1.00	100.04 9
5700 Facilities				
5710 Insurance	180.90	950.00	769.10	19.04 9
5720 Office Rent	2,400.00	2,400.00	0.00	100.00
5730 Telephone/VOIP	72.92	100.00	27.08	72.92 9
5740 Venue Rentals/Donations	250.00	250.00	0.00	100.00 9
Total 5700 Facilities	2,903.82	3,700.00	796.18	78.48 9
5800 General Church Expenses				
5802 Office Supplies	1,198.82	500.00	-698.82	239.76 9
5806 Copier Usage	1,041.49	600.00	-441.49	173.58 9
5808 Postage	573.90	500.00	-73.90	114.78 9
5810 Computers/Technology	1,369.33	750.00	-619.33	182.58
5810.1 Tithe.ly Subscription	792.91	864.00	71.09	91.77
5810.2 Zoom Subsciption	194.29	240.00	45.71	80.95
5810.3 Dropbox Subscriptions	447.40	450.00	2.60	99.42
5810.4 Stamps.com Subscription	259.73	120.00	-139.73	216.44
5810.5 Google GSuite	87.99	160.00	72.01	54.99
5810.6 Techsoup Quickbooks	75.00	75.00	0.00	100.00 9
Total 5810 Computers/Technology	3,226.65	2,659.00	-567.65	121.35 9
5812 Internet Service	618.99	600.00	-18.99	103.17
5814 Web Presence	316.72	400.00	83.28	79.18
5820 Instrument Repair & Tuning		1.00	1.00	
5822 Music Supplies	102.51	100.00	-2.51	102.51
5824 Worship Supplies	483.73	400.00	-83.73	120.93 9
5826 Hospitality	200.00	200.00	0.00	100.00 9
5830 Conferences/Meetings	578.57	1,000.00	421.43	57.86
5834 Subscriptions		1.00	1.00	
5840 Other Event Expense		1.00	1.00	
5842 Memberships/Dues Expense		1.00	1.00	
5844 Other Acts of Faith Expense	1,596.34	1.00	-1,595.34	159,634.00
5848 Bank/Monetary Fees	1,046.98	500.00	-546.98	209.40
5850 Miscellaneous Expense	1,195.33	2,000.00	804.67	59.77
Total 5800 General Church Expenses	12,180.03	9,464.00	-2,716.03	128.70
Total Expenses	\$147,706.74	\$145,495.63	\$ -2,211.11	101.52 %
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$3,595.00	\$ -2,635.63	\$ -6,230.63	-136.40 %
NET INCOME	\$3,595.00	\$ -2,635.63	\$ -6,230.63	-136.40 %

2023 Finance Report: Director of Operations

Respectfully Submitted January 5, 2023

2023 turned out to be a year of stabilization of our expenses. SPC did experience a few unexpected events with computer problems and insurance changes, but these events were almost neutral on the budget.

SPC insurance policies for General Liability, Workers' Compensation and Disability have all been replaced by new carriers. These events happened at different points in the year and affected the budget differently. Workers' Comp and Disability premiums are now about half of what SPC was paying previously. In addition, I was able to contest 3 years of premium related to the Pastor's Workers' Comp coverage, which resulted in a \$950 refund. As a result, those budget lines look like we didn't spend all that was budgeted.

The General Liability coverage has been moved to Liberty Mutual at a significant savings. However, that change was made in October and I selected a quarterly payment structure for this policy. As a result, it looks like we didn't spend all that was budgeted, because only OCT, NOV and DEC were paid in 2023. Unfortunately, I expect the 2024 policy may be impacted by the recently discovered Synod minimum suggested requirements for coverage. I expect the Presbytery Trustees may have something to say about the General Liability coverage after they have reviewed our policy. The Synod only "recommends" coverage levels, they are not mandated. However, churches that do not meet those recommendations will be excluded from Synod umbrella protections. SPC no longer has the liabilities that building ownership implies, and we carry the coverage required by St. John's Meadows and other venue vendors.

SPC video and DVD productions required the replacement of the main office computer and cloud storage devices. This resulted in added technology and miscellaneous expenses, but still well below budget expectations. 2024 should be free from unexpected technology problems, but the misc. budget should probably be maintained.

Inflation has impacted SPC in 2023. Virtually every product or service the church uses has increased in cost. SPC has spent years refining, consolidating and minimizing services and consumables to match our precise needs. Our budget closely matches the overall needs of the church and its programs.

In conclusion, I believe 2023 might be our cleanest budget in recent years. We planned for minor surprises. We did not experience any major problems. We enter 2024 on level footing.



2024 Budget Projections

Income and Expenses

4100	Per Capita	\$1,000		
4210	2024 Pledges received:	\$75,104		
4220	Additional Giving	\$2,000		
4230	Non-pledgers, gifts	\$5,000		
4380.1	IPC Pastor Pay Offset @ \$4118.57/month:	\$49,422.84		
	IPC Admin Pay Offset @ \$1030.00/month:	\$12,360		
	Income Total	\$144,886.84		
5110	Pastor cash (\$5000 to fund HRA)	\$26,435		
5120	Housing	\$22,000		
5140	SECA	\$3,323		
5150	Board of Pensions	\$18,890		
5160	Pro & Travel expenses	\$3,500	(I suggest this be increased)	
5170	Education	\$1,500		
	Pastor total	\$75,648		
5310	Andy Pay	\$16,275		
5320	Kevin Pay	\$31,500		
	Staff total	\$47,775		
5410	Payroll Taxes	\$4,000		
5420	Workers' Comp/Disability	\$800		
5430	Appreciation w/inflation	\$400		
5440	Kevin retirement contribution	\$6,300		
	SPC Payroll	\$11,500		
5520	Music Supply	\$1,000		
5560.1	Payroll Service	\$1,200		
	Contracted Services total	\$2,200		
5610	Per Capita 2024	\$1,200		
5620	PCUSA Mission	\$700		
	PCUSA & Mission total	\$1,900		
5710	Insurance: Liability	\$1,200	(probably going up in SEP)	
5720	Office Rent	\$2,400		
5730	VOIP Phone	\$100		
5740	Venue Rentals	\$250		
	Facilities total	\$3,950		
5802	Office Supplies	\$1,300	(based on real 2023 costs)	
5806	Copier Usage	\$1,100	(based on real 2023 costs)	
5808	Postage	\$600	(stamps keep going up)	
5810	Tech	\$1,400	(based on real 2023 costs)	
	Tithely	\$864	(price went up)	
5810.2		\$240	(price will go up)	
5810.3	Dropbox	\$450	(price unchanged)	

5810.4	Stamps.com	\$120	(price went down 50%)
5810.5	GSuite email services	\$160	(price went up)
5810.6	Techsoup-QuickBooks fee	\$75	(price unchanged)
5812	Internet	\$600	
5814	Web Presence	\$600	(all costs are increasing)
5822	Music Supplies	\$100	(Ask Andy)
5824	Worship Supplies	\$300	(batteries candles go here)
5826	Hospitality	\$250	(lodge cost increasing)
5830	Conference/Meetings	\$1,000	(was offset by PBY grant \$1000)
5848	Fees (Tithely and bank)	\$500	(with no carried credit balances in 2024)
5850	Misc	\$2000	(keep for a cushion)
	General Expenses total	\$11,659	

Balance Sheet Proposed Actions

2960

A few things should be considered to clean up the balance sheet:

\$2,587.41, I suggest this allocated elsewhere or used.

- \$6 Petty Cash sitting in the safe for many years. I'll deposit this into the checking account.
 Payroll liabilities that we don't use. I made them inactive, so not shown on report. We use a payroll vendor.
 Disregard this negative balance. I think it carried over from 2022 when I worked on IPC computers.
 \$1,105 of Special Offerings that need to be paid. Session can ask the Treasurer to ask me to pay.
 \$478.48, I suggest this money be allocated to another fund, perhaps the food cupboard?
- So everyone understands how these liabilities work...

Let's say you have \$30k in your bank account... and you have \$10K of liabilities sitting in these "fund accounts." That means you only REALLY have \$20K of spendable cash available. The other \$10K is already allocated to the funds. As resources diminish, it's best not to have lingering liabilities.



Looking Ahead

As we are engaging this anniversary year, I find myself thinking both about those who came before us and those who will come after us.

When Mrs. Emmaline Bell Barker donated land - not once, but *twice* - for building a church building in the mid-19th century in what was then West Brighton, NY, she may or may not have been aware that there was another group of people educating children on the shores of the Erie Canal just a few miles away in what would later become the Upper Monroe Neighborhood. The origins for both South Presbyterian and Mt. Hor Presbyterian (later New Life Presbyterian) were anchored in meeting the needs of children and families in their areas. Both began as Sunday School programs because both churches had an eye out for the future.

Now ... almost 200 years later ... located in some of those same locations (as well as several others, and online!) ... spiritual descendants of both congregations continue to look around them and see what is needed in *this* time and place, and then to reach out and meet those needs.

They could not have imagined where we would be all these years later.

But God did.

And the result of a small handful of people ... a "merry little band of believers" ... a "wee kirk" saying YES! to the Holy Spirit ... there were over 12,200 times (!) that people "bumped up against Jesus" through us this year (see p. 7 for details).

That is where we have been. That is where we are today.

But where are we going next?

Those answers are what we are discerning this year as we contemplate where God is leading us and who will be the leadership that takes us there.

The Acts of Faith Model relies heavily on everyone bringing her/his gifts to the table, and as was pointed out in the Gala Potluck, God is preparing us for the next 10 years.

Each one of us needs to ask ourselves what our own gifts are and how we can support each other in sharing their gifts.

Personally, I think it's time to add another phrase to our "dangerous" (and beloved) prayer. "Put us where you want us, God, and show us what to do" is only part of what we are committing to. The third part is just as important, and I believe it is where God is leading us in the years ahead:

Put us where you want us, God; Show us what to do, and Help us to DO it!

When we open ourselves to the new possibilities laid out for us by the Holy Spirit, we are saying YES! to God. And in so doing, what had been seen only dimly (1 Cor. 13:12) becomes crystal clear. It is laid before us and we have energy and excitement to do it. That is the work before us!

Pastoring ... Shepherding ... Walking along with you all is a gift to my life and I remain humbled that Jesus would invite me to be on this journey with you as we all seek to see him more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly Day by Day. Thank you, one and all.

To God be the glory for writing our story!

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