

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2021 – June 2022



SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

Founded in 1837; rebuilt on present location in 1860

27 Pleasant St. Concord, NH 03301

603-224-2521 * www.southchurchconcord.org * office@southchurchconcord.org

2020-2021 South Church Staff

Rev. Jared Rardin, Pastor

Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo, Interim Pastor

Kayla Pingree, Administrator

Sue Berlenbach, Music Director

Alison Nyhan, Director of Christian Education

Abigail Charbeneau, Organist

Carlene Ruesenberg, Handbell Program Director

Walt Irvine, Sexton

South Congregational Church

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Annual Report

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Clergy Reports

Pastor (Rev. Jared A. Rardin) What a joy, at long last, to come together in-person again to worship God in our beautiful sanctuary and in the uplifting spirit of each other's company this past September! Since then, gradually, and intentionally, we eased our pandemic-related gathering restrictions and as of this moment, masking is optional. Thanks to the staff, volunteers and choirs for their long patience and continued willingness to step up to whatever was needed to keep us connected and move us into a world of hybrid worship and our first-ever hybrid Annual Meeting. Even so, as we speak, our country just passed the grim mark of 1,000,000 people who have died from Covid, and new cases are on the rise.

There was much to celebrate this past year. The Vision and Transition team brought us to a forward- and outward-looking Mission, Vision, and Values Statement. This is, and will continue to be, an exciting and energizing time of the life of the church as we seek to put flesh on the bones of the vision. Special thanks to Sean for his many gifts and for his faithful support and leadership in so many ways. We are hoping to extend his interim with us through January.

Our Racial Justice Action Group led us through the first phase toward becoming a Racial Justice Church of the United Church of Christ, familiarizing ourselves with the nature of white privilege and systemic racism. Thanks to Lynne and Chip Morgan, Janet Zeller, and Toni Callahan for hosting conversations with members of the congregation. We were also glad to welcome back Maurice Tiner on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend to inspire us in our continuing work. This summer we will screen Tim Wise' movie *White Like Me* during worship and are inviting the congregation to join in the reading of Isabel Wilkerson's book, *Caste*.

This year we had the privilege of hosting Becky Josephson's ordination on April 27, and we rejoice in her call to serve as pastor and teacher of the Canterbury Congregational Church! The members of Worship and Spiritual Life and I have found it deeply meaningful to support Cherie Shaw and Derek Waldron on their journeys toward becoming Members in Discernment with the Merrimack Association. We bid farewell to Israel Cawley, who is now in a similar process in the Jewish faith.

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With a generous gift of \$100,000 from Thelma Lyon in memory of her grandson Matthew Pingree, we had the funds to purchase a much-needed new in-house sound system and to install new video technology which will significantly enhance our streaming ability. Thanks to Sean and the rest of the tech team for making this happen!

Other celebrations:

- We resumed gatherings of the SAGES.
- In addition to leading Confirmation, I have been a part time support to Julia Wagner, who has led Senior High youth group.
- The *Get Movin' 185 Challenge* is off to a great start, thanks once again to the staff, Laura Knoy, and Zib Correll.
- Although we needed to say farewell to Lou-Ann Poirier and Peg Wenzel, we have been very fortunate to welcome Kayla Pingree as our new and capable Office Administrator.
- Alison and I both celebrated our 20th anniversaries with South Church.

This year was one of much loss. Our hearts and prayers are very much with the people of Ukraine who have lost and suffered so much in the wake of Russia's brutal invasion. Over the course of the year, we celebrated the lives and mourned the deaths of Paula Bradley, Martha Jordan, Carol Dunlap, Matthew Pingree, Bev Estabrook, and Priscilla Giles. We also lost my father in November after his long battle with Parkinson's, and I am grateful to so many of you for the cards and expressions of support and condolence.

One of the central questions of recent months has been what my role as pastor was going to be, especially in light of my Parkinson's. I have been prayerfully in discernment about that question, and I've come to realize that God is calling me to something new, just as God is calling South Church to something new. I have said many times and will say again that I truly love this congregation, and I do not feel called to serve another church in the role of pastor. I do, however, feel the tug of several emerging interests that full-time pastoring has not allowed me time to pursue. So, until further clarity emerges for me, I am calling that next phase of my life "early retirement." In consultation with members of Council, Worship and Spiritual Life, the Transition Team, and the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, I have chosen to continue leading as your pastor until June 30, 2024. The two-year framework should allow you the needed time to search for and call a new lead pastor and any other clergy leadership South Church desires.

In the meantime, we have much work to do, much love to share in our community, and much Easter hope to offer the world! With thanks to all of you, and especially to our outgoing Council President, Janet Zeller, for her unwavering enthusiasm, initiative, and leadership these past several years!

In peace and love,

Rev. Jared A. Rardin

Interim Associate Pastor (Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo) The word "liminal" comes from the Latin word "limen," which means threshold. To be in a liminal space means to be betwixt and between. It is a time, place, or state of being when you are on the precipice of something new but not quite yet. It can be an unsettling time of not knowing, so it can feel chaotic or like we are trying to run in molasses. It is a time of metamorphosis and shifting change. It is the Saturday of Holy Week. While liminal time can be unsettling, it is by and far the most significant time of growth.

Over this past year, as a church, we have courageously walked through liminal space and done the critical work of grounding, discovery, and dreaming that such a time requires. Through Jed's leadership, the diligent work of the Vision and Transition Team, and our community's many discussions and contributions, we have celebrated who South Church has been in the past, identified who we are in the present, and envisioned who we want to be in the future. Accomplishing these goals while facing the global pandemic's challenges was no small task and credit is due to our congregation for its creativity and excitement in the process

Much of the work we have accomplished together, our South Church community affirmed and celebrated in the adoption of South Church's new Mission, Vision, and Values statement and with the ongoing and exciting task of putting living them out. The Vision and Transition Team report and recommendations summarize our church's work over this past year and help map out our congregation's bright future. The whole world has shifted and adapted over the past couple of years and South Church is transitioning into its new calling to a changing world. With the Holy Spirit's guidance and the power of the resurrection, we boldly move forward into our new calling.

It is a blessing to serve at South Church. I experience every day the warmth, creativity, dedication, joy, and hope of our community. I am grateful for the work we have accomplished together and excited about what is before us.

Blessings,

Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo

President's Report

President (Janet Zeller) This has been a year of deep reflection, new beginnings, and joyful in-person worshipping once again. We eased back into worshipping in the sanctuary. At first, alternate pews were closed. With all wearing masks, the choir sang the hymns while the congregation remained silent. Gradually the congregation returned to singing. In time for Easter, our Music Director Sue Berlenbach and the choir returned to singing their beautiful anthems. Throughout the year, Abby Charbeneau has continued to bless us all as she plays the organ and piano. Carlene Ruesenberg and the Memorial Bell Choir have lifted our spirit of worship many times through the year. The three Christmas Eve services were in-person and well attended, by reservation to control the size of the congregation. Easter was a joy-filled, all are welcome worship service. A returning that felt much like pre-pandemic years.

Since the spring of 2020, South Church has also shared the worship service online via Zoom. This online opportunity continues to serve our Concord congregation and well beyond with South Church friends from other states also joining in the worship. The Church Council has committed to maintaining this online option. Thanks to generous donations, the cameras, microphones, and managing technology have all be upgraded to better serve all. Thanks to the Technology Committee, led by Sean. We're grateful to Walt Irvine, Liz MacClellan, Carlene Ruesenberg, and Alison Nyhan for managing the Zoom connections on Sundays. All South Church committee work has continued via Zoom as well.

The Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo, our Interim Pastor, has led the Vision and Transition Team as South Church moves through this time of transition. Through this transition time, we've looked back at who we are as a church and looked ahead; what is the mission of South Church being called to and what leadership do we need to get there? The congregation had a variety of opportunities to share their thoughts on the work South Church is called to do. This healthy, proactive assessment led to a draft Mission, Vision, and Values statement. Following two months of discussions, on February 20, 2022, South Church adopted its new statement of its Mission, Vision, and Values. South Church is now actively living into and energizing that work.

Jed and Sean are a strong team. We are thankful for their calm and steady leadership, counsel, their spiritual challenges for us, and their up-lifting ways. Their creativity and all-around flexibility are gifts. We are also thankful for our creative staff, working hard behind the scenes and creatively finding ways to enrich our worship. South Church is healthy and continues to operate, support our members, and serve as an open and affirming outreach of God's love in these challenging times.

Staff Reports

Church Administrator (*Kayla Pingree*) My first year at South Church has been a whirlwind of experiences and changes! It has been an absolute pleasure to meet all the kind, generous members of this community and work together as we adapt to these changing times. The staff has supported me throughout this transition; I could not have done it without them!

I began in September of 2021, taking over for Lou-Ann as she began her retirement and worked closely with Alison to distribute Peg's assignments. All these duties were new to me, however, so I will do my best to sum up the major points of the year.

During the fall, I reorganized and updated our member files. This allowed me to familiarize myself with the names and families of the congregation, even if I was unable to meet them in-person! This summer, I hope to create and distribute updated member information forms for the congregation to complete. This will allow me to renew our records with any new addresses, phone numbers, name changes, and volunteer interests.

A major aspect of my job has been updating and maintaining the church website. Although I have some familiarity with web design, this has been a great learning experience! I redesigned our home page to simplify the information and make everything easier to find. I hope to continue to improve this design in the coming year, so I appreciate all feedback from the congregation. Our website is there to help connect our ministry to you; please let me know if there were anything you would like to see!

As Covid restrictions eased (and then tightened, and then eased again), South Church slowly resumed in-person meetings and events. To meet our financial goals, I updated and standardized the church rental prices and policies. This included working closely with our bookkeeper, Karen, to discuss reasonable expectations of utility costs during events. We also resumed many in-person AA meetings and hope to bring even more back as the summer continues.

Each week I have worked on the bulletin, managing pledges and donations, scheduling events, and assisting the pastoral team with any current projects. I enjoy speaking with members of our community every day, and I look forward to seeing even more of you in-person in the upcoming months. Thank you for your patience and kindness!

Director of Christian Education (*Alison Nyhan*) How time flies! It's hard to believe that it was twenty years ago I was given a one-year contract to be the Youth Coordinator. My role was to work with the youth groups and the church school program. At that point, I had been working with the Senior High Youth group for three years (as a volunteer) with a great group of advisors and youth. Working with the youth program was exciting and a job I knew I could do; and I welcomed the opportunity to work with the younger children. It was different, but I was up for the challenge.

Five years later, we hired the Minister of Spiritual Growth! As my family was growing, I was ready to change my role to meet the needs of the church (and my family). The plan was that I was to work with the church

school program and provide administrative support for the youth programs as the Director of Christian Education. I was not longer attending youth group meetings and going on mission trips, but I continued to help with the planning of the meetings, fundraising, and trip details. Carlos and I had a great working relationship. As time went by, he naturally did more for the youth groups and I focused on the church school program and families.

When Carlos accepted the call at the First Congregational Church in Pelham, it coincided with the beginning of the Pandemic. Things were changing fast . . . meetings and worship were remote; we were working from home; we were learning how to use computer programs to stay connected; and Carlos was leaving. Of course I was sad to see Carlos leave, but we were also in survival mode with the Pandemic and we rarely saw each other. I never had time to think about it. I do not think I truly realized Carlos' departure until his installation at the Pelham Church two years later. And now, I can say that it's amazing to see someone you enjoyed working with for 13 years; consider him a great friend; and be proud as he thrives in a role he loves in Pelham. Go Carlos!

In addition to Carlos' departure, Lou-Ann and Peg both left. Peg's responsibilities were shifted among our new administrator (Kayla) and myself. While I am still the Director of Christian Education, I have assumed some additional responsibilities. I am now the editor of our bi-weekly electronic newsletter, e-Lation!; help maintain the church website and other social media postings; and recruit volunteers. I have to say, I love my job! This congregation is amazing. I love hearing what you have been doing, knowing how your family is, hearing about your interests, and how you want to be involved in South Church. Kayla and I have developed a rhythm that works as she learns and grows in her role here. She has been a great addition to our team.

Still, I feel like this year our lives were like a wild roller-coaster ride. We were strapped in our seats and had to handle both the highs and lows. It was great that the church year began in-person, but as the Covid numbers fluctuated, all of us had to pivot often and be flexible. We could have the best laid plans, but one case of Covid could take one family out of the picture for ten to twelve days and those plans were tossed up in the air. Often we found ourselves questioning our decisions and prioritizing our choices. Navigating this new normal was never easy, but the resilience of this community still held strong, stronger than we knew we could. Now, at last, we are together!

Molly is in eleventh grade and Colby is in ninth grade at Concord High School. In the fall both the children were excited to return to school in-person. While they still had to wear masks, they were happy to see their friends and teachers face-to-face. As the year progressed the Covid numbers were low, the mask mandate was optional. Molly ran on the CHS Cross Country team, CHS Swim team, and was a distance runner for the CHS Track and Field team. Molly continued to be a strong participant on each team. Molly would like to attend college after she graduates in 2023 and we have started visiting a few colleges. It's hard to believe that this time next year we will know where Molly will be attending in the Fall of 2023. Colby participated on CHS's freshmen football team, Manchester Monarch's hockey team, the JV CHS hockey team, and played Babe Ruth baseball. Colby likes each sport he plays, but he really took to football. As you know, Kevin has been coaching football for over 20 years and it has been a part of our family life since before the children were born. However, Colby found his own footing in the program and is looking forward to the years to come.

The pandemic has enhanced my creativity. I am constantly thinking of ways to connect with God, and with one another. This year, I was able present the Advent Video Devotionals; display the Sacred Allied Quilt Ministry

quilts, the Lenten Art Exhibit, and the Reflections of the Mission, Vision, and Values in Fellowship Hall or the Sanctuary; guide the children's Epiphany Tableau; and provide an opportunity for Our NH Story to collect stories from South Church's members.

I love art and specifically art created by children and youth. Often, I will use their artwork on our church bulletins, in the e-Lation! or in our hallways. The children in the church school program, Junior High youth group, and Senior High youth group have also created and donated artwork to Concord Hospital's Psychiatric Unit during Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter. The children and youth are happy to be active in the greater community and enjoy the fact that their handywork will brighten someone's day.

In the fall, the goal is to be back to two worship services, offer a remote option and continue the good work we do. I cannot wait to see what creativity will spark our spiritual growth and faith journeys next year.

Highlights of 2021-2022:

Vacation Bible School: Our theme, *To Mars and Beyond*, allowed our voyagers on a space adventure to explore to see where God's power could take them. Our voyagers learned the stories of Daniel; Esther; the Good Samaritan; Jesus Heals; and the Journey to Emmaus. Each day, we spent most of our time outside as our voyagers reached for the stars and encountered the limitless power and love of God. We also hiked a trail in Concord and visited the Discovery Center to witness God's gifts before our eyes and beyond. We had 13 youth participate in our program.

Advent Events: During Advent, we had various workshops to embrace the season with wreath making, ornament making, card making and a carol sing. We made Christmas wreaths using embroidery hoops, traditional greenery, and ribbon. We made ornaments of "Joy." We made and wrote cards for members of our congregation. We joined virtual for a carol sing.

Advent Booklets: *Hope for Christmas Past, Present and Future* written by Stephenie Hovland, celebrated the eternal gift of hope found in the past, present and future presence of Lord and Savior, Jesus! This booklet of daily Advent prayers focused on the long ago promise of the coming of Christ, the present coming of Christ into our daily lives and the hope of Christ's glorious return and our eternal home. These prayers lifted one's spirit throughout the Advent season with a daily reminder of the infinite ways God has, is and will continue to bless us all.

Advent Booklet for Families: *Countdown to Christmas!* Each family created their own Advent centerpiece to count the days until Jesus' birthday. The rhyming devotions in the sticker booklet add to the excitement and anticipation by retelling the biblical story of the prophets, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, and the angels.

Advent Video Devotional Series: During Advent, Sean and I asked members of the congregation to participate in a video devotional project. We asked them to find an ornament in their own collection that refers to hope, love, joy, and peace. And reflect on the following questions: Why is this ornament special? And what can I give to Jesus' world? Each participant created a 3-to-4-minute video reflection

based on these questions. The videos were then presented on our website and on our Facebook page throughout the four weeks of Advent. It was a great way for people to connect near and far.

Sacred Allied Quilt Ministry: Prayers of Thread . . . During the summer of 2020 nine UCC churches in New Hampshire collaborated and created a quilt exhibit to memorialize the deeply painful last words of George Floyd . . . words that express years of injustice and racial suffering in the United States. Mr. Floyd's public torture and murder began the awakening of a country that has never fully reckoned with more than 400 years of trauma endured by people with black bodies. This powerful and moving exhibit was on display from Saturday, January 1 to Sunday, January 9 in Fellowship Hall.

Epiphany Tableau: This year we presented the Epiphany Tableau "*Once Upon a Manger*" written by Tracy Wells on Sunday, January 9 during the 9 a.m. worship service. This performance had a role for everyone, including members of the congregation! Guided by storytellers and carols, the children told the beloved story of Jesus' birth.

Lenten Devotional Booklet: *Full to the Brim* was an invitation to be authentically who you are, to counter scarcity and injustice at every turn, to pour out even more grace wherever it is needed. It began with Ash Wednesday and continued through Easter, this booklet offered commentary, poetry, visual art, and written reflections plus hymns and journaling prompts for Holy Week. It encouraged one to walk at your own pace; following the rhythm that works best for you.

Lenten Art Exhibit: *Crying in the Wilderness: A Flight for Survival*. In 2018, "Antony" ran from his war-torn home after attacks and death threats because of his political opinions. To save his family, he fled, seeking asylum in the U.S. only to be arrested, shackled, and jailed for two years. Due to Covid he was released and placed under house arrest which requires that he wear an ankle monitor and it severely restricts his movements. In 2021, photographer Becky Field and "Antony" started a project to document life under house detention through her photos and his writings and artwork. The project raised awareness of asylum seekers, the U.S. immigrant system, and host communities. Their work was on display from Wednesday, March 2 to Sunday, April 17.

Singing for the Souls: As a sign of solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people, we came together and sang a few songs during Lent. We lifted our spirits and to sent healing prayers to the Ukraine. It was a moving experience for all those who participated.

Our Story NH: For millennia, humans have told stories. We tell stories to communicate and share our common experience; to express our hopes and fears; and deepest beliefs. We tell stories to bind ties between us and strengthen the web of human connectedness. In times of joy . . . we tell stories. And in times of great pain and strife . . . we need stories. The Our Story NH project seeks to create, share, and collect stories across New Hampshire of life, experience, feelings, hopes, and thoughts of life during, before, and in anticipation of a post-pandemic reality. Volunteers from the Our Story NH project were at South Church to hear and record your stories.

Mission, Vision, and Values Reflections: We recently adopted a new Mission, Vision, and Values statement for our church. Now that we have adopted this statement, we need to figure out how we are

going to live into this statement. For this art exhibit, we have repurposed a few of the life-size images that were presented in the Sanctuary during the Pandemic and have asked individuals and couples to reflect on these two questions: Which values resonates with you? And how do you plan to implement those values in the life of the church? We asked the congregation to take the time to read their responses; to reflect on the proposed questions; and think about what this statement means to you and your participation in the church.

Director of Music Ministry (*Sue Berlenbach*) This year, the music ministry was able to provide music for service in a variety of ways. We were also happy to return to performing live during the service. We welcomed guest musicians throughout the spring. We were happy to include wind instrumentalists as the Covid numbers began to drop. We had musicians who became ill with Covid but due to diligent mask wearing, this was not spread to other members. While we are still struggling with music participation, both Memorial Bells and Chancel Choir were able to resume rehearsals during the spring.

Abby, our organist and accompanist, is an outstanding musician and is an asset to our staff. She has excellent relationships with musicians in the congregation and includes them, as well, in preparing music for our online worship.

Cataloguing South Church's music library is an ongoing project. There are perusal binders of almost all of the titles in the South Church music library. The library is catalogued on Google Sheets.

I look forward to a time when all musicians will feel safe to resume regular rehearsals at the church. Our singers, bell ringers, and other guest musicians are commended for their contributions to our services.

Ministry Reports

Worship & Spiritual Life Ministry (*Deb Imse*) This year, we supported our newest members in discernment: Derek Waldron and Cherie Shaw, who are very close to the end of their studies. We also celebrated Becky Josephson's recent ordination and calling to the Canterbury Congregational Church. Our ministry assisted with communion as we were needed during the transition back to in-person services. We are thrilled to have a new sound system and hope to sometime have screens up front to assist folks who may have trouble seeing the hymnal and bulletin.

Faith in Action Ministry (*Peggy Scott*) Faith in Action Ministry was able to complete their mission of supporting community, national, and international charitable efforts as the Covid pandemic continued. We met monthly via Zoom and supplied short videos for the Sunday worship service and write-ups to be included in the e-Lation!, church bulletin, and website. In recent months, with the pandemic easing, we presented the Moment for Mission in-person. We were pleased when Patty Fahey joined our ministry, still a small but mighty team of four.

We continued South Church's tradition of being a "Five for Five" congregation with donations to all five of the UCC programs: Church's Wider Mission (\$15,000), Neighbors in Need, Christmas Fund, Strengthen the Church, and One Great Hour of Sharing. Total donations for these programs from both our budget and the congregation's Moment for Mission donations are \$17,500YTD in comparison to \$17,700 last year. We also have continued our annual giving to the UCC Global Ministries Disaster Relief Fund in the amount of \$500.

We continued our focus of supporting local, and New Hampshire based charities. This included The Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, NH Food Bank, Ascentria, Overcomers Refugee Services, The Children's Place and Parent Education Center/Waypoint, and The Friendly Kitchen. Donations to these organizations totaled \$3,953. Additionally, we supported two international children's organizations with donations totaling \$900.

We supported a donation drive for the Merrimack County Day Care and stocked their supplies with donations of ~\$2,000. Additionally, church members donated their time to the three Family Promise Host weeks with an estimated value of \$4,837.

Lastly, Faith in Action Ministry stepped up when the Church Council called with the opportunity to support an Afghan evacuee family. Through the generosity of our congregation, we fully furnished an apartment at 6 South State Street in less than 7 days. The estimated value of these donations was ~\$3,500. We also donated \$900 from the April Moment for Mission for this family.

Although it was another challenging year, through its Faith in Action Ministry, South Congregational Church made a positive impact locally, nationally, and globally through donations to diverse organizations. We wish to thank Jed and Sean for their insights and support throughout the year.

¹ This amount does not include One Great Hour of Sharing, the May Moment for Mission.

² This does not include the Friendly Kitchen donation as we do not have the May and June offerings

Giving Ministry (*Lorens Jorgensen*) The Giving Ministry meets the third Thursday of every month. This year we met on Zoom. Hopefully next year we will be meeting at the Church. As far as pledge fulfillment, South Church is on pace to take in about \$260,000 in pledges, this is lower than what we were expecting. Loose offerings higher than what expected with the donations that we received. Our pledge drive continues to be a month-long campaign that happens annually. Our goal is to get \$295,000 in pledges. (This would match last year's total.) We have had a significant amount of pledge increases so hopefully we will exceed those numbers. A big thank you the committee for their hard work this year. Thank you also to all who have given to South Church their time, money, talent, and prayer this past year.

Property Stewardship Ministry (*Peter Imse*) During the past fiscal year, the Property Stewardship Ministry has continued its efforts to manage, repair and maintain our Church facilities at Pleasant Street and our Community Building investment property at 6 South State Street and to assure that the Community Building continues to generate net income each year to support Church operations. Highlights of activities that we have undertaken during the past year include:

Pleasant Street:

- Continued the process of the restoration of our stained-glass windows with a very substantial gift from the Blood family.
- Arranged for the repair and restoration of portions of the Fellowship Hall wall and repainting stained wall areas.
- Investigated options for improving the lighting in the Chancel to benefit both our clergy and choir during services, but also those who rent the Church for performances.
- Investigated options to upgrade the electrical service at the front of the Sanctuary and in the Chancel.
- Continued to rent parking spaces in the Church parking lot to generate additional income.
- Identified several instances in which trees surrounding the Church have grown so that the branches are now rubbing either the Church building or the roof and obtained quotes to have the trees trimmed and/or removed.
- Investigated the option of replacing all the thermostats in 6 South State St. so that they are the same style and are more user-friendly than the current mix.
- Identified the fact that the small shed that protects the two stained-glass windows above the Chancel has deteriorated significantly over the years and must be restored. We have obtained quotes to have the shed restored.
- Investigated the possibility of illuminating the large Sanctuary windows facing Pleasant Street and the newly restored windows in the bell tower in the evening.
- Noticed that the library bookshelves are separating from the wall and threatening to fall on the floor. We are in the process of getting the shelves repaired at this time.

Community Building:

- Reviewed existing tenant leases and adopted rent increases to reflect the current residential market.
- Negotiated a reduction of the space occupied by Cornerstone Family Resources.
- Begun the process of listing the unoccupied portions of the 6 South State Street with a commercial real estate broker.
- Lined up a contractor to create a new attractive wall at the south end of the Church parking lot where there are rocks and rubble at this time. The contractor will also investigate steps we can take to repair the leaning granite slabs.
- Worked in Ascentria Family Services and the Faith in Action Ministry to place an Afghan family in one of our residential apartments.
- Explored various options regarding the future use of the property, including: a ground lease of the property, sale of the property, and conversion of the current commercial portion of the property to residential use.

To Do Items (Projects we have identified that need work, as and when funding becomes available):

- Cleaning of Sanctuary rugs and refinish Sanctuary floor
- Repairing and/or replacement of Parish House windows
- Repairing of the shed protecting the Chancel windows
- Proceeding with the Chancel electric upgrade
- Proceeding with the Chancel lighting upgrade
- Completing restoration of our stained-glass windows
- Painting and repairing damaged trim throughout the entire exterior of the Church and Parish House

We welcome suggestions, observations, and questions from Members of the Congregation as to additional matters that need our attention.

Faith Formation Ministry (*Cynthia Hogan*) The activities of Faith Formation Ministry have been sustained through the pandemic, at a necessarily slow rate. We have been part of New Member classes, the Confirmand's Breakfast, outreach to new members, as well as activities like the Pie Fest. We look forward to resuming favorites like Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.

The recent adoption of the South Church Mission, Vision, and Values gives our ministry an opportunity to explore our role in how to live into those guiding principles. We want to identify for ourselves and the congregation how our re-invigorated Faith Formation Ministry will weave in.

Part of our discerning process will be a review of the bylaws to enable clarity of roles as South Church enters a time of transition. We see Faith Formation's involvement in the faith journey of our young members as critical.

Therefore, we will look at the church school program, the responsibilities of the Director of Christian Education, and the staffing of the Youth Ministry programs.

Church members can be helpful to us by communicating what we can do to be supportive, particularly at providing nurturance for our new members as they integrate into South Church.

Lay Ministry Visitors (*Toni Callahan*) With Covid still lurking, The Lay Ministry Visitors often did their visiting this year by telephone. Even so, we were able to connect with and provide a listening presence for church members facing transitions. The group continues to have nine active visitors: Jean Bragg, Herb Carpenter, Kathy Daniels, Nancy Haigh, Bill Jacob, Bonnie Ota, Jay Haines, Oge Young, and myself.

We have continued one or two calls per month on members of the congregation. We have offered approximately 120 official phone calls, with many unofficial follow-up calls as well. Again this year there was, sadly, no Service of Remembrance. Instead, as we had done last year, we each made telephone calls to church members who had lost a loved one within the last three or four years. These phone calls were, as with last year, very well received and seemed much appreciated. For all of us it continues to be an honor and a privilege to represent and to serve South Church as Lay Ministry Visitors.

Racial Justice Action Group (*Janet Zeller*) The Racial Justice Action Group of South Church, created in November 2020, continues to meet twice a month. To quote from an article by Rev. Jed Rardin, *“We began with the focus of educating ourselves about the pervasive ways in which racism finds its way into our thinking and how easily it becomes part of a privileged narrative that is often blind to the far-ranging effects on people of color and on ourselves. We have committed ourselves to engaging our congregation in the process of becoming a Racial Justice Church as recognized by the United Church of Christ.”*

Beginning last fall, on the fourth Sunday of each month, a church member shares a “Moment for Racial Justice” as their testimony on their “awakening to racial issues.” These testimonies will continue into the next church year. A resolution describing our intention to become Racial Justice Church was published in the January 6, 2022 edition of e-Lation!

In January, Alison Nyhan arranged for the *George Floyd Sacred Ally Quilt Project* to be shown in Fellowship Hall and opened for public viewing. During Lent, the sanctuary hosted a joint project with Becky Field showing her photographs of asylum seeker “Antony” paired with his poetry which reflects his current status under house detention in New Hampshire.

March brought Church Conversations on Race with Zoom and in-person gatherings led by Toni Callahan, Janet Zeller, and Rev. Jed Rardin. A full list of resources for that study of racial justice issues can be found on the homepage of the South Church website. Summer Racial Justice opportunities include South Church Reads the book, *Caste*, by Isabel Wilkerson; the movie “Just Mercy” viewed at home, both discussed in the fall. Also included are a video and podcast on white privilege, plus great field trip ideas. More details to come!

Staffing Ministry Reports

Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (*Emily Geoghegan*) The Pastor-Parish Committee concluded the Pastor's Periodic Review and shared its findings with Church Council. The PPRC also met with Jed throughout the year to process the many transitions occurring in his life and in the life of the parish. The PPRC participated regularly in Church Council and met with the Vision and Transition Team to address some of the transitions in ministry that are occurring.

Personnel Committee (*Ashley Babladelis & Carolyn Kerr*) This year we welcomed Kayla Pingree to the church staff as the Office Administrator and wished Lou-Ann Poirier farewell and best wishes. We continue to have an amazing team. The staff have all been flexible and lived up to the common work phrase "other duties as assigned." The 2021-2022 year has included: Zoom worship, in-person worship, and music of all kinds. The Personnel Committee is grateful for the staff and all they do behind the scenes to keep the South Church community going. We recognize that much of their work is not visible to the larger group and appreciate all they do.

Mission Reports

Relief Society (*Kathy Daniels*) The Relief Society was founded in 1882 by Franklin Evans in memory of his wife with \$200. This humble gift has increased and enabled this committee to help those in our parish and in the community by providing one-time assistance to the Concord Homeless Resource Center, Emergency Assistance Network, and through Pastor/Parishioner requests. The committee is funded through contributions given by the congregation during communion offerings in October, tributes in memory of loved ones and interest from invested funds.

Committee Reports

Guild (*Edie Dimick & Lorraine Fournier*) The primary responsibilities of the Guild are to prepare Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month and to host any requested funeral receptions or celebrations as needed. One Guild member for the 8a.m. service and two Guild members for the 10a.m. service are needed. It is also the responsibility of the Guild to wash and put away any instruments that were used during the service.

For this year, in addition to preparing for Communion each month the Guild prepared a reception for Becky Josephson's ordination and a funeral reception for Priscilla Giles. Due to Covid there were many restrictions that applied to 2022.

Collections & Deposit Committee (*Jean Bragg*) The committee now consists of three teams of two people. Each team does one Sunday a month; the fourth week is done by office staff. Hopefully we will get more counters as we had several people drop out this past year. We have a couple of men who are willing to be on the committee. After some training, hopefully, they will feel comfortable enough to make up a fourth team and relieving the office staff of that week. Hopefully we will be able to get back to processing checks that come in the office during the week as well as Sunday's collection and drop off the deposits.

Genesis Circle (*Edie Dimick & Lorraine Fournier*) Genesis Circle fosters Christian Fellowship through activities and services to the church community. Because of restrictions due to Covid and out of an abundance of caution for our members, Genesis Circle has been inactive since Covid. We do hope to return to some degree of normalcy this fall.

Vision and Transition Committee (*Peter Imse*) The Vision & Transition Committee has been meeting since mid-2021 in response to Sean's invitation that we "work with the Congregation to establish its vision for the future and actions we need to take to get there". Since that time, the Committee has been actively responding to Sean's call to action.

Preliminary Reviews: During the first months of the Committee's work, we spent time reflecting with the Congregation on the Church's historic place in our community, its past achievements and what has made it special in years' past. We then spent time reviewing who we now are as a Church and what makes us special in our community today. Following these reflective periods, the members of the Committee spent several months meeting with members of the Congregation, both in online and in-person sessions, to discuss our members' views as to where we are as a Church, what makes us special, and, most importantly, what are their hopes and dreams for the future of our Church and for their lives within the Church. We were fortunate to have over 70 members of the Congregation participate in these discussion sessions.

Preparation of Mission, Vision, and Values Statement: Following these reflections and discussion sessions, the Committee reviewed and discussed all the comments that we received from the members of the Congregation. Using these comments, the Committee prepared a proposed Mission, Vision, and Values Statement (the “MVV Statement”) to capture the major recurring themes, issues and ideas that are important to our Congregation.

The Committee circulated the MVV Statement to all members of the Congregation and invited them to review, reflect, respond, and comment on our efforts. We also held further discussion sessions to allow members of the Congregation to present their comments, questions, and concerns regarding the proposed MVV Statement. After listening to all the input, the Committee agreed to a modification of the draft MVV Statement to underscore our identity as a “Christian” community. Happily, at a Congregational meeting at the end of February 2022, the Congregation adopted the proposed MVV Statement with the edits suggested by members of the Congregation. The final MVV Statement reads:

Our Mission:

We are a Christian community seeking to be living examples of radical hope and extravagant love, connecting our community with God and with each other.

Our Vision:

We will create opportunities for spiritual growth, build a welcoming community of diverse relationships, serve our neighbors, and work for a just world.

Our Values:

- *Active involvement in our greater community*
- *The need to spark spiritual growth and creativity*
- *Being welcoming and open to all people*
- *Nurturing each person’s faith journey*
- *Advancing social justice issues*
- *Intergenerational worship and activities*
- *Faithful stewardship of our resources in support of our Mission and Vision*

Future Planning: Once the Congregation adopted the new MVV Statement, the Committee turned to the task of considering recommendations to the Congregation as to the implementation of the MVV Statement. We observed that there is an energy and desire in the Congregation to become more active. The new Racial Justice group is a recent example of how interested members are pursuing new missions. We have also heard a recurring message that our members have a strong desire for opportunities to explore their spiritual growth.

To help determine how the Church might capture this energy and focus it on realizing the goals of our MVV Statement, the Committee asked all Church Boards and Committees to reflect on the MVV Statement and report to the Committee regarding actions they would undertake and the resources and support that they would need to live into the new MVV Statement. We received many exciting and detailed responses from Boards and Committees. These responses helped us to identify key areas where leadership and resources will be required in the future to achieve our goals and objectives.

In coming years, these responses should serve as a focus or guide for the new missions and ministries that the Congregation will undertake.

Challenges Identified: While the Committee was exploring how our Congregation might realize the goals in our new MVV Statement and the leadership that we would need to do so, we also discovered certain other information that is directly relevant to our future plans. Among other things, for many years we have not been growing as a Congregation, Sunday worship attendance has fallen significantly, and Church School enrollment has dropped. In addition, based on information provided by the New Hampshire Conference, we discovered that our average annual giving per member is significantly below that of other NH churches of similar size.

We also discussed potential funding needs for the new initiatives to be undertaken under our new MVV Statement and acknowledged the annual problem we have had with adopting a balanced budget. In reviewing our budget information and available literature on Church finances (available upon request), we also discovered that we spend significantly more on personnel expenses than is recommended by budget guidelines applicable to Church communities. While we do not compensate our clergy at a level consistent with New Hampshire Conference Guidelines, and our only full-time staff consist of two clergy and our Office Administrator, we spend over 70% of our annual income on personnel costs, when the recommended benchmarks indicate that such costs should not exceed 50%. Because our annual giving does not equal our personnel costs, we also realized that our earnings from our invested funds and from our investment property at 6 South State Street and other gifts provide all the funds that are needed to pay our non-personnel expenses.

Jed: Throughout the Committee's work, Jed encouraged us to freely discuss his ongoing health issues and how they may impact the Mission, Vision, and Values process. His recent announcement of his intention to retire as of the end of fiscal year 2024 has provided some clarity with respect to future planning for Church staffing needs, and we thank Jed for that.

Recommendations: The Committee recently met to discuss the recommendations that it wished to make to the Church relative to next steps in the implementation of the MVV Statement and future planning for the Church. Based on all the input that the Committee received, the Committee offers the following recommendations:

1) The Church should immediately begin a search process for a new Senior Minister to replace Jed when he retires. Since these search processes usually take 18 to 24 months, it is likely that we will not have identified a new Senior Minister until close to the time that Jed will be retiring. This Committee has identified the following list of areas of primary interest to our members under the MVV Statement, and recommends that the Search Committee seek new leadership with strong talents in each of them:

- Children and Youth
- Worship
- Spiritual Growth/Faith Formation
- Community Outreach/Involvement
- Pastoral Care
- Evangelism
- Social Justice
- Intergenerational Activities
- Operations
- Advocacy/Social Justice
- Stewardship
- Building Community
- Church Community
- Diversity

- 2) To provide support for Jed and the Congregation in the near term, we recommend that Sean's employment by the Church as Interim Minister be extended to January 2023.
- 3) Following the end of Sean's time with us, the Committee recommends that the Church enter into a part-time contract with an Interim Bridge Minister to handle specific tasks or projects that the Church identifies as needing particular support.
- 4) The use of a part-time Interim Bridge Minister will help us to begin to reduce personnel expenses during fiscal year 2023. The Committee also recommends that the Church adopt a goal of reducing our personnel expenses to no more than 50% of our annual income during the following 3 years on a phased-in basis. We leave to the Church Council and future leaders of the Church to determine how these goals will be reached. We also do not envision that these percentage reductions must necessarily come at the expense of existing staff positions. Should annual giving be increased substantially through increased giving by our existing members or growth in membership, the need for reductions would be lessened.
- 5) Once a new Senior Minister is hired, we expect that he/she/they will work with the Congregation and Church leaders to develop an appropriate staffing model for the Church that is consistent with our financial abilities and the level of Congregation support.

Throughout the Committee's work, we have been deeply blessed by the active participation and involvement of Church leadership and the members of the Congregation. At every step of the process, our goal has been to understand what we are all called to do and to be as God's representatives here on earth. We thank everyone for their support and welcome comments, questions, and input regarding our recommendations.

Minutes of the 184th Annual Meeting June 13, 2021

Call to Order: David Fries, Moderator. It is determined that we have a quorum.

Invocation: Rev. Jared Rardin

Memorial Slideshow: Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo

Minutes of the 183rd Meeting: Approved Unanimously

Nominating Report and Election: (Alison Nyhan) • Thank you to everyone who has served on a ministry and served in the past. • Mary Ewert retired from flowers after 12 years • President: Janet Zeller, Vice President: Sarah Willingham, Moderator: David Fries, Clerk: Peg Wenzel, Past President: Mary Lynne Rahlson, Treasurer: Lorens Jorgensen. • **Faith Formation** has decided to extend their current terms by one year due to pandemic. • **Faith in Action** will add Patty Fahey. Peggy Scott has renewed second term. • **Worship and Spiritual Life** added Sally Bird, Celeste McQuarrie, and Cherie Shaw. • **Giving Ministry** no changes • **Personnel Committee** added Tammy Ciminesi and Carolyn Kerr. • **PPRC** no changes • **Pastors Aid** no changes • **Lay Ministry Visitors** no changes • **Collections and Deposits** added Adria Cilley. • **Guild** added Edie Dimick, Pegi Frosthalm, and Deb Kimball. • **Delegates** no changes • **Flowers** added Dianna Powers • **Relief Society** added Ginny Mierins. • **Planned Giving** added Nancy Brown. • **Property Stewardship** no changes. Nominating Report approved unanimously.

Appreciation for Ministries: (Rev. Jared A. Rardin) • Thank you to everybody. Unsung heroes: Lou-Ann Poirier, who is retiring August 27; Janet Zeller; Mary Lynne Rahlson; Walt Irvine; Liz MacLellan; those who created the life-sized posters of the congregation; those who ring the tower bell every day at 4 p.m.; bead stringers who helped Alison create memorial bead tapestry to acknowledge the losses of Covid; and the sponsors and participants of the *Get Movin' 184 Challenge*. • David Fries adds thank you to Pat Knight and Jean Bragg for their years of volunteering with the Collection and Deposit committee. • Moment of silence for those we have lost this year: Hal Harrison, Bill Hodges, Cindy Beise, Mary Giles, Dave Burnham, Karl Levick, Ferd Prevost, Robert Lovewell, and Suzanne Trice.

Membership Report: (Alison Nyhan) As of March 20, 2021 we had 518 members. • Received 3 new members through transfer and 7 through confirmation with a total of 528 members. • 6 members passed away. • Total of 522 members.

Budget Report: (Lorens Jorgensen) (He shared his screen with spreadsheet.)

- We were expecting less income with pandemic, but members continued to donate and fundraisers helped.
- Our expenses were much lower due to not being in person; also repairs could not happen in-person. Assets rose this year. • Carlene Ruesenberg asked for clarification on the spreadsheet. Lorens explained the actual finances (actual) vs. what had been expected (projected).
- *Pledge totals* were \$260,582; expected \$265,837.
- *Expenses* were \$254,116; expected \$276,867.
- *Loose offerings* were \$49,866; expected \$55,000.
- We expected to use money in the South Church fund, but we have not used it yet. • We haven't used the Hoyt fund.
- *Fundraising* was \$11,000; expected \$7,500.
- *Administrative expenses* were \$6,037; expected \$8,048.
- *Christian Education expenses* were \$1,158; expected \$1,665.
- *Faith in Action expenses* were \$15,619; expected \$20,000.
- *Music expenses* were \$1,689; expected \$3,250.

- *Personnel* expenses were \$254,116; expected \$276,867.
- *Operating* expenses were \$11,322; expected \$21,875.
- *The Pleasant Street building* costs were \$40,733; expected \$65,827.
- *The Community building* (6 South State Street) costs were \$17,589; expected \$31,420.

Stock Market was good to us, many our various endowments continued to go up. • Music budget: We can take from the music reserves (the Hoyt Fund) up to whatever our expenses were. • The staff were given some raises. • We covered our expenses with our savings account this year • Next year will be increased in cost due to full staff and returning to person. • Major commercial tenant in 6 South State St. will be discounted next year. We are taking money from savings to cover these costs. • Last year pledge total was \$305,000. We discounted that by 5% to come up with budgeted figure for this year. At the end of April, we were at 98% of our goal. • Next year's budget is \$278,350 for pledge. • One of our biggest incomes will be various endowments and savings next year. Before end of this fiscal year, we will take \$35,000 from the South Church fund. • The South Church endowment has risen to \$668,000.00 as of the end of April. • Hoyt Fund of \$230,000 may be used to cover new sound system. • \$42,000 in reserves of 6 South State Street and \$34,00 in reserves for Pleasant Street should cover, with fundraising, any needed funds. • Upcoming Budget: \$278,350 for pledges. \$60,000 loose offerings. • Reduced gifts to \$3,000. • Moseley fund \$7,000. • Projecting to take out \$70,000 from UCC South Church Fund. • Personnel related expenses will increase. Rental income will drop to \$49,992. • Budget deficit of about - \$16,000. • David Fries asked if the draws from investment are consistent with the policy created for that. Lorens affirmed. • Budget approved unanimously.

Remembering Those Who have Died: (Rev. Jared A. Rardin) Horace Blood, Robert Lovewell, Hal Harrison, Bill Hodges, Nancy Sears, Nancy Ware, and Willow Ashley.

Closing Prayer: Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo

Adjourn the Meeting: David Fries voted to adjourn the meeting. • Approved Unanimously

(*These minutes submitted by Kayla Pingree, taken directly from the Zoom recording on June 16, 2022.)

Membership Report to the NH Conference, March 2021:	482
<u>Received into membership through Confession of Faith:</u>	0
<u>Received into membership through Reaffirmation of Faith:</u>	1
<u>Received into membership through Transfer:</u>	4
<u>Received into membership through Confirmation:</u>	11
Total Increase in Membership:	16
<u>Removed from Membership through Death:</u>	5
<u>Removed from Membership through Inactive:</u>	2
Total Decrease in Membership:	-7
Adjustment to Membership Total:	+11
Total Membership as of 6/22/21:	533

Nominating Report Officer, Ministry and Committee Rosters 2021-2022

Officers

President:	Betsy Clardy	1st Term	2024
Vice President:	Duane Bailey	1st Term	2024
Moderator:	David Fries	14th Term	2023
Past President:	Janet Zeller	1st Term	2024
Treasurer:	Lorens Jorgensen	4th Term	2023

Ministries

Faith Formation: *(up to 9 Members)*

Bruce Bairstow	2nd Term	2024
Judy Forest	2nd Term	2025
Cynthia Hogan	2nd Term	2024
Joanne Miles-Holmes	2nd Term	2025
Ryan Sahr	2nd Term	2023

Faith In Action: *(up to 9 Members)*

Patty Fahey	1st Term	2024
Pegi Frosthalm	1st Term	2025
Susan Hatem	1st Term	2023
Shasta Jorgensen	1st Term	2025
Peggy Scott	2nd Term	2024
Pauline Simonton	2nd Term	2025

Worship and Spiritual Life: *(up to 12 Members)*

Sally Bird	1st Term	2024
Joel Eaton	1st Term	2025
Becky Field	1st Term	2025
Jay Haines	2nd Term	2023
Celeste McQuarrie	1st Term	2024
Bonnie Ota	1st Term	2025
Cherie Shaw	1st Term	2024
Julia Wagner	1st Term	2025

Giving Ministry: *(up to 12 Members)*

Kit DeVries	1st Term	2024
Liz Garlo	2nd Term	2023
Lorens Jorgensen	2nd Term	2023
Joe York	1st Term	2025

Property Stewardship: *(up to 9 Members)*

Debbie Carley	Mary Lynne Rahlson
Will Delker	Mike Gfroerer
Peter Imse	Lorens Jorgensen

Racial Justice Action Group:

Nancy Brown	Eileen Jones
Faye Buttrick	Linda Kenison
John Buttrick	Susan Moore
Toni Callahan	Chip Morgan
Tammy Ciminesi	Lynne Morgan
Sean Dunker-Bendigo	Tracey Osborne
Jenifer Evans	Jed Rardin
Becky Field	Janet Zeller

Staffing Ministries

Personnel: (up to 5 Members)

Ashley Babladelis	1st Term	2023
Tammy Ciminesi	1st Term	2024
Carolyn Kerr	1st Term	2024
Steve Murray	1st Term	2023

PPRC*: (up to 5 Members)

David Fries
Emily Geoghegan
Bill Jacob
Laura Knoy

**PPRC members chosen by Worship & Spiritual Life Members and Pastors*

Spiritual Care and Visitation Ministries

Pastor's Aid:

Eileen Gfroerer	N/T
Bill Jacob	N/T
Eileen Jones	N/T
Cheryl Nickerson	N/T
Ray Phelan	N/T
Cy Sherman	N/T
Pam Young	N/T

Lay Ministry Visitors:

Jean Bragg	N/T
Toni Callahan	N/T
Herb Carpenter	N/T
Kathy Daniels	N/T
Rachelle Eaton	N/T
Nancy Haigh	N/T
Jay Haines	N/T
Bill Jacob	N/T
Bonnie Ota	N/T
Oge Young	N/T

Committees

Collection & Deposit Committee:

Bruce Bairstow		N/T
Jean Bragg	27 years	N/T
Adria Cilley	2 years	N/T
Tom Fahey		N/T
Christine Frost	10 years	N/T
Pat Knight	27 years	N/T
Kevin Nyhan	5 years	N/T

Church Guild:

Paula Cheney	N/T
Edie Dimick	N/T
Lorraine Fournier	N/T
Pegi Frosthalm	N/T
Kathy Gullage	N/T
Deb Imse	N/T
Eileen Jones	N/T
Deb Kimball	N/T
Deb Lincoln	N/T
Mary Rosenthal	N/T
Cy Sherman	N/T
Cheryl Simmer	N/T

Delegates:

Kit DeVries	1st Term	2023
Cherie Shaw	1st Term	2023
Cy Sherman	2nd Term	2023
Joanne Varga	2nd Term	2023

Flowers:

Dianna Powers	2nd Term	N/T
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Nominating:

Toni Callahan	1st Term	2025
Becky Field	1st Term	2025
Janet Zeller	1st Term	2025

Relief Society*:

Kathleen Daniels
 Nonnie Hall
 Ginny Mierins
 Sarah Sadowski
 Pam Wagner
 Pam Young

**committee self-appoints members*

Planned Giving*:

Tina Annis
 Nancy Brown
 Peter Imse
 Oge Young
**committee self-appoints members*

Vision and Transition Committee:

Rev. Sean Dunker-Bendigo
 Peter Imse
 Charles (Chip) Morgan
 Rev. Jared Rardin
 Jill Smart
 Leanne Tigert
 Sara Willingham
 Pam Young
 Janet Zeller