



Crossroads

*News from South Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
45 Maple Street, Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 732-0117 www.sococh.org*

*We are an inclusive community of faith; courageously following Christ;
serving our neighbors in love.*

November 2021



Viability: the quality or state of being ***viable***, such as the ability to live, grow, and develop (from Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary)

Introducing the South Church Viability Working Group

What is the South Church Viability Working Group?

A small group committed to asking questions that clarify South's viability and engaging the congregation in honestly answering them.

The Viability Working Group is the group committed to helping South be intentional about our present and future. The Viability Working Group will *not* be coming up with a plan and then saying *this is what we have decided to do*. Rather, the group is committed to creating and engaging you all in a process of honest discernment toward clarity around South's future.

What is "viability"?

Part of what the Working Group will do is clarify the definition of viability for South.

Some of what viability might include is:

- People capacity - capable, engaged folks to tend both the business and the missions of the church? Some of this capacity is related to the age of the congregants and how busy their lives are beyond church and skill sets.
- Financial capacity - a sustainable income stream? Clarity on financial priorities?
- How do we have a sense of ourselves connected to the cultural shifts around us that we are all a part of whether we want to be or not?
- What is within us.

Why is it?

Uncertainty. We do not like uncertainty. And yet, we live with uncertainty all the time. And uncertainty around South's future is present, too.

South has a dwindling membership, worship attendance and church engagement. This is a trend that has been going on for years. South is not alone among churches in that. While we have the financial resources to just keep on keeping on for some time, our faith and our love of South challenges us to engage our present and future with intention. When we make decisions with intention, clarity and energy emerges.

We want South to live with intention, using whatever form we may need to evolve to take.

Rev. Lindsey's term as our Designated Term Minister is from October 2020 - October 2025. A little more than a year prior to the end of her term, South and she will discern together if this is a ministerial relationship that we both want to continue and turn into a "settled" pastorate.

We need to be honest in our discernment over the next 2 to 3 years in part so that we have clarity when the time for a ministerial transition comes.

We also hope that by taking on the complicated question of South's viability and wrangling with it with love and intention, the Viability Working Group can help open some channels of relief and trust within the South Church community.

How will it work?

Unlike "church growth" consultants South has hired in the past, the Viability Working Group is composed of people who are part of South. This is not a one weekend event. Rather, over the course of a year and more, the Working Group will map out ways of engaging with South, with the Leadership Circle and the whole congregation, so we can together express and understand where we are.

We don't yet know exactly how we will work! This is also part of the uncertainty. But we are committed to working with you all on this. This will not be a case of the Working Group coming up with a plan and then saying *this is what we have decided to do*. Rather, this is a process of wandering together and in that wandering, with intention and by honestly engaging questions and making observations, to come together in clarity around South's viability.

Who are the Viability Working Group members?

Polly Southworth



I have been a member at South my whole life.

There was an 11-year period when I was in college and grad school and my first job where I lived around the Finger Lakes of New York state. But I returned to Massachusetts and my roots when I was 29. I got married, had a kid and returned to church.

Why? The simple answer is I wanted my child to have a religious foundation. I didn't think too deeply about it at the time. It just seemed like "what you did". I like comfort and familiarity and South offered that. It's true you can't pick your family, but you can pick your church. I didn't really pick South since I was "born" there, but over the years, it's come to me that the circles you put yourself in after your family are very special and South has come to fall into that category. The solace, spirituality, people and community I find at South helps me in my life.

If South were to cease, I'd probably find another church. But, of course, it wouldn't be the same.

I never involved myself with the New Beginnings effort because it didn't feel right. How could they come in, tell us what to do, and leave?

As Lindsey has said, we have uncertainty and anxiety over the future. It's time to jump in and look at us from the inside. Us talking to us. Not someone else talking to us. It seems we need to be proactive and deal with the issue now. So maybe it's too late for South, but I don't think so or I wouldn't want to get involved.

It is not easy to try to look "clearly" at yourself or an organization, but if South is important to me, I need to try to keep it going so that the church can be important to someone else. Involving all of us in

this discussion is important because we are South. The answers are not clear now, but with prayer, laughter, and commitment, I think we can find them.

Bill Conley



I've been part of three efforts aimed at discerning "Where does South Church Go from Here?" They ranged from unguided self-examinations to efforts guided by the UCC Conference or consultants. I was Moderator during some of them and very involved in the day-to-day life of South. Unfortunately, as Pastor Lindsey points out, our past efforts haven't really brought about much.

I was very involved in the New Beginnings project. Forty South members spent many weeks in meetings and discussion about our past, present and future. It guided us to confront what kind of congregation we are and to what kind of future we aspire. Are we a Country Club where we pay our dues and sit back waiting to be served? Or, are we an activist congregation which gets out of the pews and the building to deeply connect with and serve our community? Or something in between? We picked the latter, a congregation dedicated to our community, ready to understand its hopes and to serve in love. But there was no implementation plan and day-to-day issues undermined the good intentions. As the Moderator at that time, I regret the lost opportunity.

This one is different for me. I'm no longer as involved, spending half of the year in Florida where I belong to another UCC church. Although I continue to "attend" many South Services via Zoom, the distance gives me a new, more detached perspective of South and of its future. My affection and hopes for South are undiminished but now they are balanced with uncertainty of our future. My detached view allows me to face that if it were not for the endowment, we would not be at 45 Maple Street, would not have a full-time minister or music director or staff.

Which prompts the question - what, besides the endowment, could possibly hold us together as a vibrant faith community "courageously following Christ"? The answer lies somewhere within you and the congregation.

Trea Andrea Russworm



After serving on Search, I'm excited to reconnect with South through this next process of discernment.

(Editor's note: Trea joined the group so recently that she was unable to contribute more of her thoughts before Crossroads went to press. She will be sharing more in written communications in the near future.)

Rev. Lindsey Peterson



As you know, my title is “Designated Term Minister” and I have a 5-year term with South, one year of which is already past! I’m like a long-term temporary pastor, or a long-term transition pastor. It is strange. Why is it this way? Well, like most every church, South is in a place where settling into the groove of the way things have been is no longer sufficient, if it ever was. At the same time, we know that change causes heart palpitations in us! Especially change in an institution that has been a pillar of routine for many since they were babies, and for others which has been like sanctuary from all the other changing things in life.

I don’t have a magic wand. I cannot change the tide of movement away from the church of the past in the culture at large - nor, honestly, do I want to. I trust God’s unfolding love, finding ways into being through new forms, seeding churches of the present and future. Jesus was always on the move, calling “*follow me.*” To follow Jesus is to enter all kinds of evolving landscapes, to risk all kinds of change, while being rooted in the depth and hope of God’s beloved kin-dom.

I am buoyed by the presence and commitment of the South Church Viability Working Group.

I am honored to be your pastor for this time; it is not an easy time. With the Viability Working Group, I am hopeful that we can be bold in our honesty around what we as South Church have capacity for and what we do not; and to make strong decisions that bring relief, energy, trust and expand the love.



Save the Date!

Rev. Lindsey Peterson Covenant Ceremony

Sunday, December 5, 2021 at 4pm

South Church Sanctuary

We will join as the South Church community with the Hampden Association of the United Church of Christ, the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ, and community partners in ministry to celebrate and confirm our covenant with Rev. Lindsey Peterson as our Designated Term Minister.

Please Pray for

Jill Hartnett's brother-in-law, George Brown, Tanya Dudley, John Burris, Karen Buske, Dan Myers, Carol Stewart, Bruce Wright, Karen Kress, Peter and Margie Nelson, Raj Ramaswamy, Stella Boulware, Oboyo Omot, Sue Wood's friends, Jodi Clements and her mom, Kastle and Cynthia, Sue Wood's cousin, Diane O'Hara, Bert Montagna, Shirley McCready, Betty Eaton, Jean Steup, her family and her grandmother, Ruth Kilcoyne, Rev. Lindsey's father, Bob Peterson, Merle Olson, Ginny Robbins, Gordon Dodge, Winfield Moore, Marjorie Munroe, Leila Cohen, Timmy Miller, Priscilla Price, Deborah Price, Silvia Walker, Julius Dixon, Jan McDonald, Mike Wright, Rev. Louis Mitchell, Jeff Johnson, Jane Closson, Rubin Reyes, Bob Stack, Beverly Lynch, Silvio Vasquez and his family in Venezuela, Renee Silva, Pastor Clemmons, Anthony Wysocki, Roland Fenton, Irene Rappa, the Pharo Family, Simone Normand, Joanne Henry, all those suffering with Covid-19.

If you would like to be added or removed from the Prayer List, please reach out to Jackie at: secretary@sococh.org or call/text her at: 413-654-8086

The Benevolence Team will be meeting on Sunday, Nov. 14 at 11:15.

Daylight Savings Time ends Sunday, November 7 at 2 a.m. Set your clocks back one hour and enjoy an extra hour of zzzzzzz.

Happy November Birthday!



6 Dawn Fitzgerald
8 Bob McCarroll
10 Carolyn Sengle
12 Jeanne O'Brien
14 Patricia Braithwaite
14 John Burris



Director of Music

The 2021 Zoom Halloween concert is now part of South Church history, and I am both relieved and invigorated. Relieved because everyone involved put a lot of work into it, and when someone who is not technically savvy (like me) has to produce it for cyber broadcasting, well, so many things can go wrong. The internet connection can be bad, or the movie software it was shown on can misbehave, or my laptop could crash. Thankfully, none of those things happened, and over 40 enthusiastic scary-music lovers showed up on Zoom last Friday night to enjoy the event. More fans stayed after the worship service on Sunday to watch the fun on the big-screen TV (see last page). It was a great experience and I am so grateful to the singers, instrumentalists, and speakers, and most especially to our resident green witch, Jayne Newirth, who tied everything together so beautifully with narration.

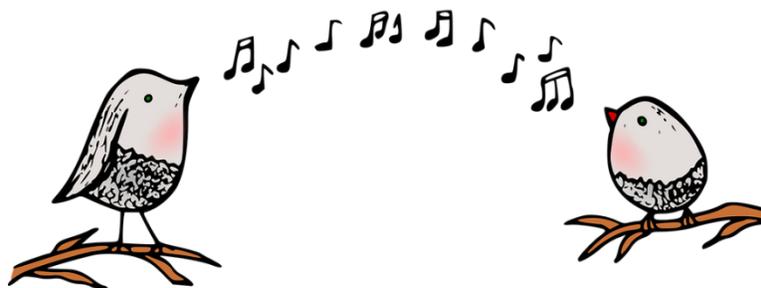
So, into November we go. The Christmas decorations have been out in the stores for some weeks now. How will the holidays look at South Church? Well, here is a solid, forthright, definitive answer: *I'm not really sure*. On the bright side, the infection numbers are dropping in Springfield, and around most of the country. On the other hand, we are coming into winter, when communicable diseases present the greatest risk, mainly because we are all indoors together. In addition, there are reports of new strains of COVID that may be resistant to the current vaccines. Is it advisable to return to normal activity in our church worship services and events just yet? Many performance spaces are presenting live concerts, even with singing, but does that necessarily mean it's safe to do so? Again, I proclaim with confidence: *Maybe. Maybe not.*



So, here is what I can tell you. In November worship services, you'll see a few more singers in the choir pews. Four each Sunday, to be exact. We will also start singing one hymn each Sunday, although it is highly advisable that you remain masked while you sing and make sure you are sitting with adequate space between you and others who are not in your household. If all goes well, that is what you can expect from music in worship for November.

Meanwhile, I make no predictions right now for December. If things really look positive, we may have a full choir, but the individual singers will have the right to protest if they feel there is still some risk. Remember that singing creates many more of those nasty aerosol particles in the air than does speaking. The more singers there are in the choir space, the bigger the cloud of particles.

I hope to bring you good, or at least, better news before too long. In the meantime, thank you again for your understanding and good humor. I wish you a fun-filled holiday season. – **Larry**



Accessing Worship

We continue to learn and improve our hybrid worship options. There have been bumps along the way, as is expected.

Over the 4 Sundays of November, you can connect with worship in the following ways:

- **In Person**, in the sanctuary at 45 Maple Street, Springfield. 10am on Sunday mornings.
- **On Zoom**. At 10am Sunday mornings. This Zoom space will include the whole worship service. Please know that it is a less interactive Zoom space than when we were solely gathered on Zoom for worship. Instead, participants are mostly muted.

Access info: MTG: 975 811 240 / PW: 041663 / Call in: 1-929-205-6099

- **On YouTube**. Live at 10am Sunday mornings. Or you can watch the recording of the worship anytime. The recorded worship is saved on our YouTube channel. Rev. Lindsey also posts it onto the church website: soco.ch.org under "worship recordings" by Tuesday afternoon. The YouTube worship experience will always include the beginning of service, through the sermon. Because of the copyright requirements of the music selections following the sermon as well as the musicians' licensing rights for livestreaming, the stream will end after the sermon.

Access info: bit.ly/SouthonMaple. "Subscribe" to be notified when we go live.

NOVEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE (Worship is accessible remotely via Zoom Live and YouTube)

November 7 (Communion): Worship in the Sanctuary at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson.

November 14: Worship in the Sanctuary at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson.

November 21 (Thanksgiving Sunday): Worship in the Sanctuary at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson.

November 28 (Advent 1): Worship in the Sanctuary at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson.

Zoom: Call-in number: 1-929-205-6099; MTG: 975 811 240; Password: 041663

YouTube: type bit.ly/SouthonMaple in your browser, for the South Church YouTube channel.

Zoom Bible Studies!

Join us for Tuesday night Bible studies at 7 p.m. Use the Sunday worship access code and password. Here is the schedule:

- November 2 – Mark 12:38-44 (led by Betty Jack)
- November 9 – Mark 13:1-8 (led by Elliott Stratton)
- November 16 – John 18:33-37 (led by Polly Southworth)
- November 23 – Matthew 6:25-33 (led by Larry Picard)
- November 30 – Luke 21:25-36 (led by Betty Jack)

A Condensed November Calendar

- Sundays at 10 a.m. – Worship and Nursery Care. Service in the sanctuary is accessible via Zoom or YouTube.
- Sunday, November 14 at 11:15 a.m. – Benevolence Team meeting in the Guild Room.
- Mondays at 10 a.m. – Prayer Shawl Group in the Guild Room
- Mondays at 4 p.m. – Quilting Group in the Music Lounge
- Tuesdays at 7 p.m. – Zoom Bible Study (use the Sunday worship login)
- Wednesday, November 3 at 7 p.m. – Leadership Circle
- November 12 & 30 at 10:30 a.m. – South Church Cooks
- Every day except Wednesday – Loaves & Fishes at noon & 5 p.m.



South Church Cares Thanksgiving Dinner

If you would like a Thanksgiving Dinner
contact Jackie in the office at 413-732-0117

1. No later than Wednesday, November 17,
by 2 PM
2. Dinners may be picked up on Wednesday,
November 24, between 3:00 and 4:00 PM
at the church
3. If you need your dinner delivered, please
let Jackie know upon placing your order
4. Deliveries will be done on Wednesday,
November 24, between 3PM and 5PM

Enjoy and Peace