

## **SUMMARY- ALL Comments**

minus duplications of intention that appeared under the same question which were combined

Developed from all the responses submitted by all group discussions and all the individual comments submitted via the online survey. In total 75 individuals shared their responses to the 5 South Church transition questions.

### **1    What in God's name is South Church doing here?**

- ONA with All people welcomed warmly.
- The church does a lot to help the community, such as supporting the homeless shelter, Friendly Kitchen, Families in Transition, Faith in Action special donations, a variety of ministries to reach the needs of all, youth group service projects and clean-up projects at local community sites.
- Support and education for all, wherever you are on your faith journey, in a troubled world.
- A place of calm; a place of radical hope; a safe space for ALL
- Supporting social issues, racial justice, voting rights, equal opportunities for all. and so forth.
- Kept the congregation connected, despite the pandemic, by holding worship services and many additional program opportunities that kept members spiritually engaged.
- Committed to being a Zoom church even after the pandemic for those who can't physically attend.
- We have many strengths and have a mixed age group, including a strong youth program.
- Zoom has helped people who live away to attend, and it is good for rainy and snowy days.
- We are reaching more people through technology – online morning prayer, poetry, and other online discussion groups/meetings.
- Supporting youngsters in their Christian journey. Our Christian Ed. Program is very good.
- Maintaining a packed church on holidays
- We are very good at being/doing outside the church.
- Nurturing each other, welcoming new faces, feeling safe and comfortable even when going outside our comfort zones.
- Music: The choirs (voice and bells), the special music various members share; music programs as another form of prayer.
- We include and value people with differing points of view. This is challenging but we seem to be able to do it.
- Letting congregation know when the various walks supporting social justice issues are scheduled and how to get involved: Breast Cancer, Alzheimer's, CROP walk, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, etc.
- South Church is the most visible of the four Concord congregational churches.
- The Church guides me in my life's paths. To aim to do good, have a place & people to Lean on when in pain or joy.
- It's a community of support, sharing, growth, finding common ground, working thru our differences.
- Church guides me in my life's paths To aim to do good, have a place + people to Lean on when pain + joy.
- Providing extended family, spiritual guidance, learning opportunities and greater mission.
- A sanctuary for troubled and a venue for discerning God's vision and providing a community energized by God's Spirit.
- To serve God and to be a living example in Concord of the love and meaning and service a church community can provide.

- We are here to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and to serve our Lord. To proclaim the good news of the Bible to ourselves and to others. To celebrate the fact that we strive to be non-judgmental, and to accept people of all religions, creeds, races, sexual identities.
- To give a place of community and hope to people who need it, whether they realize it or not.
- The Racial Justice focus is a positive church wide effort.
  - The opposite was shared by a participant “Justice and the focus for justice doesn’t resonate for me. Eradicate the critical race theory; it should not be spoken from the pulpit”.
- We do help our community and it helps me grow my faith and try to be more kind.
- To form the kind of community in the Holy Spirit that no worldly community can be, and to enact that good news as mission, and proclaim that good news as into a broken world.
- Continue extending an extravagant welcome (as Jesus would), by putting the love of God in action.
- To form the kind of community in the Holy Spirit that no worldly community can be, and to enact that good news as mission, and proclaim that good news as into a broken world

## 2 **What do I need from South Church?**

- Sharing worship. Inspiration. Connecting with the community of worshipers. Serving community.
- Spiritual guidance and community
- Spiritual inspiration and spiritual growth challenges and support. Share the daily devotional readings from the national UCC
- The feeling of warm welcome that is always here for everyone.
- MUSIC The choirs (voice and bells), the special music various members share. New and lively music also some traditional music.
- Sense of community. Missing the connection with others in our church, due to some being on Zoom, some at 8 AM others at 10 AM worship services. Also miss fellowship hour.
- Improve our sound system
- More opportunities of intergenerational gatherings (post Covid). Offer child care for all church activities not only for worship services.
- Need dynamic engaging activities for children/youth including service projects.
- The church to be vigilant about Covid, masks, and back to the Zoom if safer.
- An organization chart of the various South Church groups/ministries, Council, etc., and how to get involved in them, attend their meetings, volunteer to serve on them, etc.
- Some more creative worship services.
- Bible studies. Maybe one that looks at different versions and helps us select a bible.
- There needs to be a strong voice from the church of love and justice.
- It feels like we are in a fragile place with the uncertainty of Jed’s illness. Will it hold us back? Will it make us stronger?
- Men’s Retreat. It needs to be offered again, it’s an important time of support for men.
- Reconnection in person at church, in Fellowship Hall after church and so forth.
- A retiree group about getting ready for retirement.
- It’s my family.
- I love routine in Church Services - makes me feel peaceful + at home. Joy of learning, joy of meeting + getting to know others. Chance to help others.
- I need shorter sermons, shorter + more(?) relevant. Talk about today's struggles(?), fears, worries on our journey.

- I need to be reminded that I am beloved by God and called to serve God's purposes. I need community, support, comfort, challenge, acceptance.
- To be inspired, not to hear politics.
- I need more opportunities to volunteer within the church and the community. God is everywhere, but the feeling is often more palpable when we gather together as one body within the actual structure that is South Church.
- MORE ORGAN MUSIC!
- I need to hear intelligent and inspiring sermons that deepen my understanding of the faith, music that lifts my spirit and touches my soul, and a friendly and loving community where all are welcome.
- Justice and the focus for justice doesn't resonate for me. "I'm a 'love' person and using the word justice feels too political. While I am impressed with the work of the Racial Justice group, it is not what I want from church."

### 3 Who lives in our (or your) neighborhood?

- Support our immigrant and refugee neighbors social/educational support needs
- Our neighbors are an increasingly diverse group of people in age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, family types and religious preferences. People who need help.
- South Church needs to:
  - Identify specific ways South Church members can help.
  - Pre pandemic- HHH residents were supporting the tutoring of ESL
  - The volunteer program of support for ESL/citizenship involving many South Church members has been rewarding to all. It was stopped by Covid and has not yet been resumed.
- Support refugees and immigrants in Concord area.
  - Continuing to support Becky Field's work raising awareness and interacting with immigrants and refugees in Concord and beyond.
- Outreach to our local and larger neighborhood:
  - Cookout to those around the church would be a friendly gesture not a membership drive!
  - Carol on Main Street during Holiday Midnight Madness, identifying as SCC, address and worship hours
  - A Family Fun Day for the neighborhood
  - Sunday afternoon community concerts.
- Participate in things in the community and represent South Church-- wear our South Church t-shirts. (Talking about our church amongst strangers can feel too "evangelical" or forceful.)
- Faith in action has been difficult during the pandemic. It has been had to mostly collect money rather than asking the congregation to engage in activities.
- We used to help with hands-on projects during community service days. It seems we did more in the past Due to the pandemic, we are struggling to do that as effectively now.
  - We need more parent involvement when the youth groups are active in community service projects.
- Reach out to the mental health community
- Reach out actively to the transgender community (David Reynolds supports that community through his work and volunteered to assist in that outreach).
- Work with more with Family Promise, like we did last summer.
- Female Charitable Trust and Relief Society
- Carlos seemed to be well connected to the community and opened new avenues for outreach. Where are we missing those connections? We need to be more visible in the community.

- We need the spark, the energy that Carlos incited in all worship and activities with our South Church family.
- Retirement community bordering immigrant settlers.
- Sinful humans (all of us), caught in sinful systems
- Is South Church still active in the Greater Concord Interfaith Community group?
- Rent our church facilities to more groups like AA?
- ALL God's people. It would be nice to engage a more robust/expansive/diverse community of neighbors
- Countless people in need. Especially those living in poverty and oppression. The homeless people, the immigrants; people who are not respected simply because they are different.
- Learn about other faith communities (e.g. Muslims, and local Afro-American congregations) by partnering with them...similar to what we do with Temple Beth Israel. We could exchange child care during their holy days as we have with the Temple.
- An increasingly diverse group of people in age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, family types and religious preferences. People who need help
- Everybody. We should continue to make explicit overtures of welcome to everyone.

#### 4 Where are we stuck?

- We're not stuck.
- Since Winter Homeless shelter ended, no singular church wide mission outreach focus. We needed to take on another hands-on active community project that needs people to support it.
- It will be hard to fill Carlos' shoes, more because of who Carlos is, rather than the actual role he was hired to do. We are still in a period of mourning this change. Need a farewell get together with the Pelham Church, congregations meet each other.
- We're not reaching out enough to the neighborhood
- We have no music program for the kids, a children's choir
- We have few all-church gatherings, fun activities for families to engage in after church
- Attendance at Sages/Progressive Dinners has been low
- We have limited inter-generational activities (auction, fair)
- Can we walk the walk? We give money, but can we help with needed tasks?
- If we propose new activities, who is going to do the work? No one signs up.
- Where are all of the 30 year olds? Why is Sunday worship not important to them?
- Asking same people to serve frequently, but not others. Instead provide opportunities to learn more about the work of the various groups and how to volunteer. Perhaps a "fair" type session after the 10AM service, with separate tables for each of the groups and sign-up sheets -well advertised in advance.
- Not enough leadership to organize outreach activities.
- Better communication with members and visitors so that new people know how to join in. A member gave the example that they knew a spiritual practices group existed, but couldn't find when it met or how to join.
- Several expressed concern about Jed's health.
  - Several groups commented - good that Jed set up a book discussion and is open how Parkinson's disease is affected him and what he can do.
  - The church needs to decide what kind of leader we need and want as we move forward. Is Jed still able to fulfill that role?
  - What is our long-term plan moving forward?
  - Is the worship and spiritual life committee helping Jed with services?
  - How will we know when Jed is limited by his health?
  - How will we know if he is able to continue in his full capacity?

- Is there a possibility of having one new and different pastor?
- Our organ is in need of repair. If the organ was fixed, other groups might be more likely to use it for concerts or community lessons.
- Since we do not advertise in the Concord Monitor anymore, the paper lists the other UCC churches in town but not South Church. This looks like we don't exist.
- Attendance at Sages/Progressive Dinners has been low.
- I feel we need to make sure church members feel they are Needed + those in mental + physical stress need to have ministers Visits + others visit
- We are not able to sustain our staff with our budget. As the membership shrinks, our expenses are too high. How can we afford two pastors? We need to think creatively about staffing.
- We need better use of space. Went to a music festival in Portland at a church which rented its space to a music school. The building should be busy and full (barring pandemic times).
- Find a way to make our sanctuary and activities be filled with a collage of people representative of the diversity around us. NH is changing, Concord is evolving, this is a beautiful opportunity in this!

## 5    **What is God calling South Church to do?**

- Be pro-active in the issues of the day versus eliminating politics from issues.
- Explore what other larger churches are doing to attract younger folks to join us. Why do evangelical churches do better attracting young families?
- Be innovative in our fund-raising projects.
- Don't duplicate what is already being done in the community, but determine what other needs there are. Is there a community organization that could help us identify what needs are out there?
- The easing of the Covid pandemic is a good time to get people together, maybe something with food and/or music.
- Participating in activities like conversations at local coffee shops or visits to local businesses can be a way to engage others outside of the church community.
- Come together and honor our commonalities, building bridges instead of dividing, have common respect for each other, wear our God is still speaking pin more often!
- Plan a light-hearted social time; we've been through a lot these past 20 months
- More growth Spiritually - awakening and growing in depth.
- More lively music.
- Become a gun-free building, a racial justice church, advocate against nuclear weapons, environmental justice.
- Consider combining the two services back into one 9:00 service so that we are more united and feel the strength of the entire congregation together, especially after our time apart.
- We need to have an identity and someone who can lead us into that identity.
- Prayer needs to be stressed more as a crucial part of the vision and transition process. We cannot do this with just our wisdom and good intentions. Perhaps the pastors can emphasize prayer as central to the process.
- Is there a way that we can engage the youth to help us discern what we need to say "Yes" to?
- Become a Racial Justice Church
- OUTREACH to ALL: more online, through others and the community, etc. More social media presence. Perhaps the youth can help with it
- Recently people are leaving evangelical churches because they are feeling disenfranchised. Some of these people are moving to mainline churches. How can we attract these folks?

- Tradition and ceremony can be important. Think of how packed the church is on Christmas and Easter. However, innovation and creativity can help to open fresh perspectives.
- Accepting everyone who walks in the door is very important, but it is hard work. That's what being a church of extravagant welcome means.
- Who is our target market? Once we figure that out then we'll know where we should advertise. Which comes first, who we are or who we're selling ourselves to?
- What would cause someone to come to church on Sunday morning instead of just listening online?
- Open liturgy to speak to the issues of the day, e.g., with language that includes everyone in the words we use (eg, LGBT pronouns, gender, God language), clarify that the Israel of the Bible is not the State of Israel, further relations with mosque and TBJ and other religious communities in the area. Join with these communities to speak to current issues that deny equitable rights to all.
- Pray for world peace, love our neighbors, help those in need, etc.
- God is calling SC continue to proclaim the love of God, teach the faith, provide help to others, and work to change the world in which we live, working for social justice for ALL.
- Have a few discussions - how do we deal with the division + hate in our world, what can we do?
- Some people are more comfortable participating in small groups than coming to church on Sunday mornings. Leadership?
- We really need to look at our entire staffing structure to make sure it meets the church's current needs.
  - Do we need a staff member with more multimedia experience who can modernize the website and maximize our web presence?
- Continue extending an extravagant welcome (as Jesus would), by putting the love of God in action.
- Welcome others always, programs for youths.
- Continue to be a vibrant and loving community striving to follow Christ, and in doing so to attract new members who will be this community in the future.