

Discernment Report

History and Who Is Southminster today?

The congregants of Southminster Presbyterian Church (“Southminster”) began worshipping together over 150 years ago in the Manchester area of Richmond, Virginia. The current church building was dedicated in the Spring of 1968. Members include individuals and families that are dedicated to worshipping God and providing service to our local community and the needs of others in the world. Southminster’s mission statement is “*Loving God and neighbor, we welcome, worship, serve and share.*”

In 2011, Southminster formed a Mission Study Team (“MST”) after the retirement of Rev. Dick Lindsey who served Southminster for 29 years. The MST of 2011, consisting of 13 members, met for over six months to identify the community needs and congregational priorities with the use of multiple surveys, listening sessions with members, websites, demographics and interviews with community partners and leaders. A new Pastor was called, and changes were made to the structure of administrative processes of the church; however, the congregation and mission remained strong in its faith and service.

The Presbytery of the James (“POJ”), church membership has decreased the last 10 years. The POJ saw a 29.79% decrease in membership from 2014 to 2023. Southminster membership also decreased by 19.3%. Southminster’s congregation has aged, and has limited growth potential; however, the Church has continued to provide programs to encourage attendance and participation. There is a need for pastoral care that the congregation has become accustomed and continued relationship building. In January 2021, about 40 members of New Covenant Presbyterian Church transferred to Southminster upon its closure adding to our Southminster family.

Using information gathered by the earlier MST, the current MST reviewed the work and outcomes of the last decade and found geographically, the development plans of this area of Chesterfield County do not expect to change in the next decade. There has been growth in the number of Hispanic people surrounding the church building and we have embraced the opportunity to welcome our neighbors, as will be discussed further.

Financially, Southminster is sound. The church building is mortgage free. It has investments and restricted funds designated for specific usage, and a yearly balanced budget. Fortunately, with the income from investments and donations from New Covenant’s assets, the congregation has been able to continue worshipping and serving its members and the community in its beautiful facility.

Changes made for Tomorrow

Under the leadership of Interim Paster Johan O’Connell, restructuring of the personnel and operating structure have been made to a traditional format. Such changes include:

1) **The elimination of an Associated Pastor’s Position (Faith Development, Pastoral Care and Youth)**

In eliminating the Associated Pastor position, the Personnel budget was decreased by approximately \$50,000 per year. The workload was divided between the Education Committee (Youth), the Minister (Critical Pastoral Care) and the Pastoral Care Group. In doing this we not only improved our financial situation, but also and thankfully built rejuvenated relationships within the congregation.

2) **Restructuring the Congregational Committee Operating Structure.**

Restructuring of the Congregation Committees and Elder training made it possible for the Elders to be ruling elders and do what they as Elders are called to do. The role of the Pastor should be focused on overseeing and visualizing the future rather than on being in charge of day-to-day operations and events of the congregation.

Through restructuring, the Session put the governing function of the Ruling Elders back into their hands. Each committee has an Elder Moderator overseeing the work and the budget of the committee. Each congregational committee member has direct access to the Moderator who represents the committee’s recommendations to the Session for approval. This change in governing has been well received in the congregation and continuing to evolve and is functioning well.

3) **The Session has re-envisioned our assets.**

This year, the Southminster Session has looked at its responsibility to its members and its ability to continue with the need to call a new Pastor. The Session identified key goals and looked at ways of achieving those goals. The Session was unanimous in its desire to secure our Sanctuary as a place of worship for the future and creating a gathering space for the broader community. To do so, through re-visioning and repurposing our assets (worship space and building), the land surrounding the building, and human assets, Southminster can sustain our vision for the future.

For several years, Iglesia Pentecostal Cantico Nuevo (“IPCN”), a growing Hispanic congregation, has rented the downstairs portion of the building inviting the Hispanic community to worship, several times a week, and provide mission services to local and South American communities. This year, the long-standing contract was renegotiated to give IPCN access to our sanctuary, Sunday school rooms and office space. Through this we serve the Kingdom of God and secured a \$50,000 per year income for the use of our facilities. The IPCN considers the church building their home and has provide additional labor to paint and maintain the building and grounds. It secures our sanctuary as Southminster’s place of worship for an extended time.

We have provided access to community groups to meet in our facility. The church also sponsors the Scouts programs and hosts quarterly concerts from various local music groups for exposure of their talents while collecting food for our food bank.

Vision for the Future

Almost three years ago, Southminster's former Pastor accepted a call to a larger church in Dayton, Ohio. We have been extremely fortunate to have Rev. O'Connell join us in the interim and helped us reimagine our talents and resources, while leading us in the worship of God and our responsibilities to others.

The MST again reached out to the congregation asking what they believe to be our strengths and needs as we seek a new pastor. Surveys were done and listening sessions were held with groups who shared what they love about Southminster and hope for the future.

Statistics

Congregation Size – 240 members

Average Worship Attendance – 60 -70 including on-line attendees

Sunday School Attendance – 15-20 with on-line attendees

Community – largest locality in the Richmond metropolitan area. Chesterfield County's 2024 population is 383,876.

Intercultural Composition of congregation – 6% multiracial

Position Type – Solo Pastor Installed, but open to a clergy couple.

Employment Status – Full Time

Language Requirement – English

Statement of Faith Required.

Responses to Narrative Questions

Using the Presbytery's *Ministry Discernment Profile* as a guide, we offer the following information:

- 1. How would you describe the congregation's/organization's specific vision for ministry? How will this vision impact the community? Is the congregation part of a ministry vision or program?***

Southminster is a welcoming and loving community, who shares its faith, resources and talents to bring others to be disciples of Christ to nurture, comfort and feed our brothers and sisters as God would have us do. The congregation's "vision for ministry" includes many

“visions;” however, the main priorities would be Biblically-based worship, including relating the sermons to personal experiences and issues in today’s world that pertain to the Biblical references, and congregational/pastoral care. Other visions include a Pastor who will be supportive of outreach and Christian education through live-streaming, including the option of worship, Bible study and Sunday school opportunities through electronic means.

Southminster shares its faith and service as part of its ministry vision through such programs as:

- Food closet supplying annually over 250 families or approximately 725 people
- School Supply Drive providing 70 book bags with supplies,
- Mitten Tree at Christmas a box of scarves and mittens to 8 area schools,
- Veteran Services meals and supplies,
- CCHASM providing support throughout the area,
- Voices of Jubilee – supporting children in detention and prison in the Richmond area,
- Mission trips for medical and disaster relief in Nicaragua, Florida, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, West Virginia and Southwest Virginia,
- RISC – Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities, a social justice initiative, and
- Southminster also has a Scholarship program that has provided scholarships to eligible members for college tuition with almost \$400,000 in funding in the last 20 years.

2. *What is the nature and context of the community in which your congregation lives out its mission/vision? How will you address the emerging needs that are impacting your community.*

The community surrounding Southminster is solidly middle class with a large Hispanic culture. Southminster addresses some of the needs of the surrounding community that include involvement with RISC, Liberation Veterans’ Services, First Responders Recognition, and interaction with nearby public schools.

The congregation would hope that our new Pastor would oversee all of the above-mentioned topics, especially leading worship, congregational care, and community outreach. Also, he/she would be expected to moderate the Southminster Session.

3. *How will this call help complement the responsibilities of other staff/volunteer positions and the life of the congregation/organization, so that you may accomplish your short and long-term goals for ministry?*

Southminster has strong core group to help with worship and a dedicated pastoral care team. The Pastor will lead, as well as delegate responsibilities to Session and committee members, and energize the church staff and volunteers. The Pastor will moderate the

Session meetings, attend committee meetings and activities hosted by the church, and lead regular staff meetings. The Pastor will work together with choir director and organist to select worship music and programs. In addition to worship leadership, it is also very important that the Pastor provide pastoral care to our members.

- 4. *Provide a description of the skills, gifts and training the person you hope will become a part of your ministry must have, to lead the congregation towards the vision and mission established.***

We seek a person who can lead us in worship and the study of the Bible and provide pastoral care of aging congregation while helping us bring families to our congregation. We need a person who can teach the Bible's lessons to use in our daily lives. We want a leader who listens and supports the members and missions that Southminster is already passionate about while strengthening our ability to grow in faith and service to others.

Following are suggestions for skills, gifts, and training that Southminster members will expect: outgoing, open to new ideas, positive outlook, thorough Biblical knowledge, good listener, excellent presentation skills, willingness to change, sense of humor, compassionate, and innovative.

- 5. *What areas of ministry do you expect the person called to be responsible for? Share specific tasks, assignments, and programs.***

The Pastor's responsibilities would include overseeing all the above, especially leading and assisting in worship, congregational care, and community outreach. The Pastor should be present and a representative of the congregation.

**Southminster Presbyterian Church
2024 Mission Study Team**

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