

# HOPE UCC

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“THE JOURNEY WITH  
CONVERGENCE AND NEXT  
STEPS”



# WHERE WE STARTED

- In May and June of 2024 Convergence did a congregational survey in which we received 85 (equal to 100% + of weekly attendance) responses.
- **Question #1:** “Do you think your congregation is growing, shrinking, or staying about the same:”
- **Responses:**
  - 51% of survey respondents believe your congregation is shrinking
  - 44% that it is staying about the same
  - 5% that it is growing.

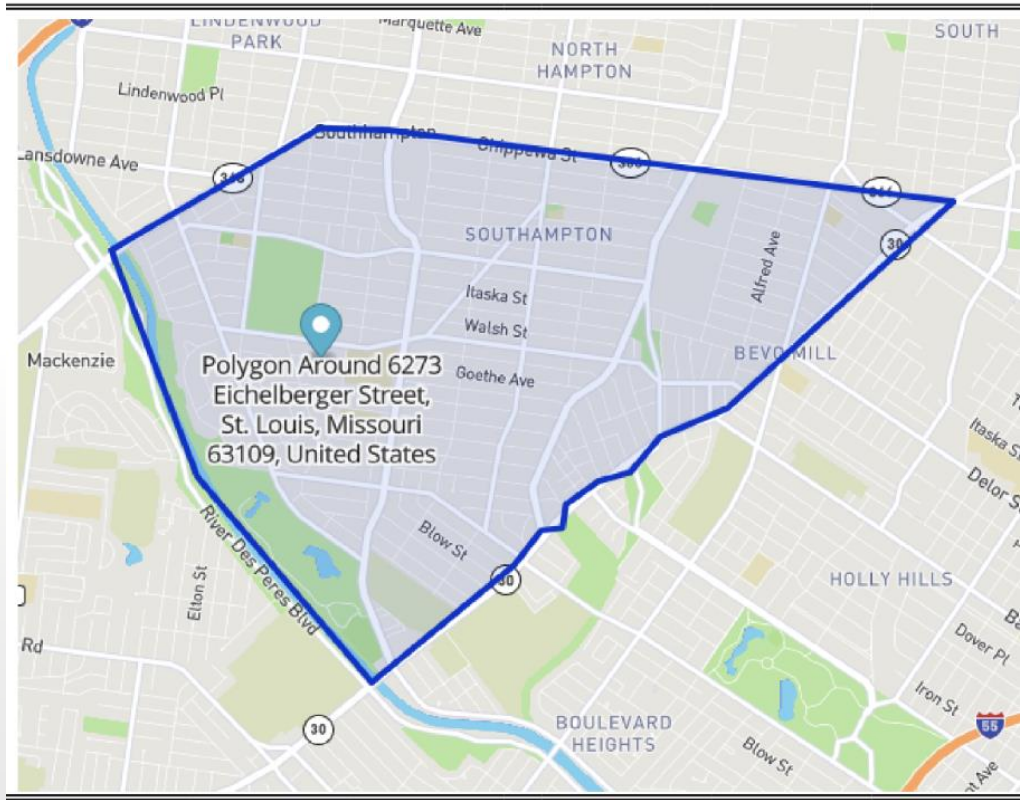




# WHAT KEEPS YOU INVOLVED WITH THIS CHURCH?



## WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!



Your neighborhood population is declining over time, from about 30,000 in 2000 to 22,500 by 2033. Your neighbors are more racially diverse than your congregation, and while higher in education than the state average, are still lower in average income level than your congregation. Incomes in your area are mixed and tend toward middle-income, and there is a stark racial disparity in income levels. The fastest growing age groups in your area are 18-24 and over 65.



# WHAT CAN SET HOPE UCC APART FROM OTHER NEARBY CONGREGATIONS?

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People in your area have many churches to choose from. There are 10+ other churches of your denomination in your larger community. Churches in your area with similar values to yours are numerous. This provides many opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

*It also means that Hope UCC St. Louis will have to consider whether it has a unique mission and vision, one compelling enough to set it apart from all the other churches in its area, as well as how it communicates that mission and vision to the community.”*



# FOCUS FROM YOUR TOWN HALL MEETING

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## **Three discussion questions:**

- **Consolidating Leadership**
- **Increasing Building Use and Revenue**
- **Community Partners & Communications**

*Most common brainstorming ideas were shared with appropriate ministry teams, Council, etc. for consideration and potential development*

# ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATION: FOCUS CONGREGATIONAL ENERGY ON DOING FEWER THINGS BUT DOING THEM WELL

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## **End the early worship service**

*Currently, we are experimenting with shorter prayer experiences rather than formal worship*

## **Focus on one mission/justice area per year**

*Currently, our newly consolidated Outreach and Justice team is working together on shared calendar of events and efforts*

## **Create smaller governance structure**

*Removed Special Events and Hospitality teams from formal structure, consolidated Outreach, Environmental Justice, and ONA teams into one team (Outreach and Justice) and consolidated Stewardship and Evangelism teams into one team (Stewardship and Community Engagement)*





## ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: WORK ON CHANGE SKILLS, TO BE MORE ABLE TO SHIFT WITH THE TIMES

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- *.Utilizing new resources for varied worship service ideas*
- *Adapting to new ministry team structure*
- *Working on new initiatives for building use, community engagement, and partnerships*

# ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS - WITH CURRENT PARTICIPANTS AND NEWCOMERS

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### Consider Zoom for hybrid worship

*Using interaction through live-stream comments*

*Using Zoom for season mid-week services, including with other congregations*

*Using Zoom for hybrid Bible Studies and other meetings*

### Update your digital and physical welcome

*Gradually updating website as recommended*

*Increasing use of social media*

*Not yet explored more formal physical welcoming structure*



# ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATION:

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS - WITH NEIGHBORS AND PARTNERS

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### Go deeper into community relationships

- *Task Force has interviewed community leaders to learn more about community needs and areas of potential partnerships*
- *Hosting and engaging with Unleashing Potential summer camp program for low-income families in South City area*
- *Researching partnership with PFLAG and/or other LGBTQ+ organizations*
- *Partnering with local artistic organizations as a resource and host for arts performances and education*

### Consider strategic partnerships with closing or shrinking churches in your area.

- *Hosting Fifth Spiritual Church in chapel twice-weekly*





# ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATION: REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER USES OF CAMPUS FACILITY SPACE

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- HopeMark Preschool
- Kim Winn Yoga
- South St. Louis Strings
- Space Station Dance residency
- Loveless Music
- Unleashing Potential (summer 2025)
- Fifth Spiritualist Church

**2024 Building Use Income: approx. \$8,000**

**2025 Anticipated Income: approx. \$20,000**

*In addition, we are preparing kitchen for licensing  
required for future rental opportunities*

## FURTHER DATA

### SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT FROM APRIL 2024-2025

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**Views** represents how many times things were looked at in the past year

Instagram 10,100

Facebook 61,000

**Reach** represents how many people you reached on each platform in the last year:

Instagram 3200

Facebook 30,700

**Content Interactions** shows how much people engaged with your posts (likes, comments, etc.)

Instagram 584

Facebook 4,500



# MORE DATA

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- Attendance Trends: Average Sunday Worship Attendance Jan-April 2024: **70**  
Average Sunday Worship Attendance Jan-April 2025: **79**  
Easter 2024: **130** Easter 2025: **153**
  - Financial Trends: *Total offering January to March 2025: 5.6% increase from 2024*
  - Financial Decision: *On April 5<sup>th</sup>, Congregation voted to use up to \$100,000 for 2026 and 2027 (each) from Endowment, as needed, to allow time for implementation and assessment of Convergence recommendations.*
  - Financial Communications: weekly and monthly offering tracking



# NEXT STEPS IN DEVELOPING HOPE'S UNIQUE VISION

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- Continue current efforts that have shown progress over the past year
- Build sustainable stewardship
- Outreach to Integration of new people
- Continued development of becoming a “Church of the Arts”

# QUESTIONS?

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