

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



A MESSAGE FROM BECKY ERBE

There is a story told about a little boy who was flying a kite. It was a windy day, and the kite kept going higher and higher. Finally it got so high that it was out of sight. A man passed by and saw the little boy holding onto the string. The man could not see the kite, and he asked the boy, "How do you even know you have a kite up there?" The boy replied, "Because I can

feel it." Although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we are able to sense the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, changing us for the better, with a renewed outlook on life.

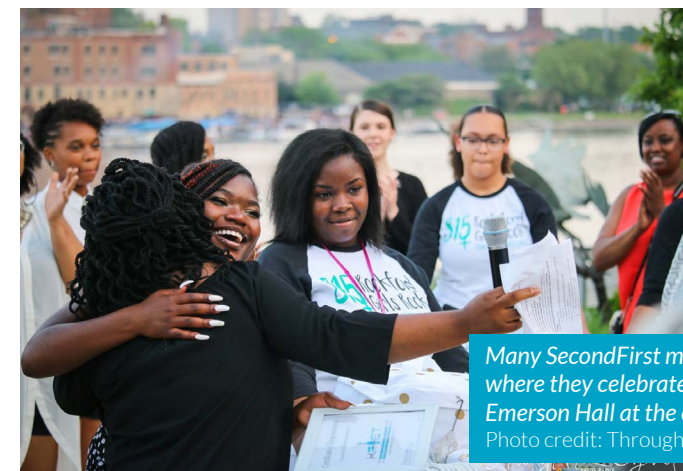
There are opportunities in our church community to be reminded of the work of the Holy Spirit and the simplest one to do is to come to church. On July 7 we will receive communion and will have a guest preacher, Eric Ngum. He is the Chaplain at Peterson Meadows. Rev. Rebecca will be back in the pulpit on July 14 after returning from vacation. We will also have the Alternative Worship at 4:00 pm. Blessings and peace to you all, as we slide through the summer days. Do remember your church family. We are here for you.

SAVE THE DATES

- August 11: Alternative Worship
- August 18: Blessing of the Backpacks
- August 18: Church Picnic
- August 24: CROP Breakfast Rally
- August 25: Joint Service at Emmanuel Episcopal
- August 27: Summit of Hope Event



Bill Hoff surveys the tower for falling stone with the mason. Early inquiries pointed to the fire of 1979 as a potential cause for this stone deterioration.



Many SecondFirst members attended the KFACT fundraiser at the Burpee on June 6 where they celebrated their first six girls graduating from college. KFACT moved into Emerson Hall at the end of June and will begin their Fall programming in August. Photo credit: Through The Eyes of Me Photography

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

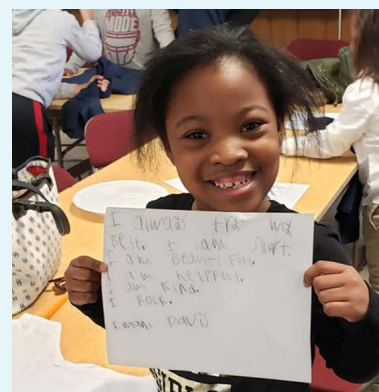
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 BURNING OF UCC RAINBOW BANNERS
 IN ST. LOUIS FAR FROM A FIRST, STILL
 DISTURBING**



Two United Church of Christ "God is Still Speaking" rainbow banners were found burning in an alley behind an LGBTQ-welcoming bar in St. Louis just before midnight June 3. Both

almost certainly came from a theft at Kirkwood UCC, an Open and Affirming ("ONA") congregation about 12 miles away, where a security camera recorded a young man cutting down and stealing two such banners at 10:55 p.m. that Monday. While police investigate, the congregation is responding with courage and love. A special message went up on the church's sign board Thursday, June 6, next to the frame that held the banners: "God loves you if you are queer and even if you stole a banner from here." Read more online: <https://www.ucc.org/>

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
 CHURCH OFFERS MONTHLY POSITIVE
 AFFIRMATION WORKSHOPS TO
 CHILDREN AND TEENS**



God-given greatness isn't something one achieves; it is something inherent to being human. This is the core message that the leaders at Elmwood United Presbyterian Church in East Orange, New Jersey, are instilling in their youth. These mentors hold fast to the belief that if a person is to be successful in the Christ-abundant life, he or

she must take complete responsibility for that greatness and protect it. Out of this conviction the church began offering a monthly Positive Affirmation workshop in October. Read more online: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/>

**alternative
 WORSHIP**

SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

**SUNDAY, JULY 14
 4:00 PM IN THE REARRANGED CHAPEL**

This is a laid back gathering with fun spirit-filled music, storytelling and food. Curious? Come! There will be storytelling and mission making. There will be communion wandering and prayer stations. There will be jeans and coffee drinking. Everything revolves around the Table, now in the center of the room. There is no "up front." All people participate in making worship.

FROM THE ORGAN BENCH, BY VALERIE BLAIR

For those of you wondering what CAGO means for your organist, I have copied the following from the American Guild of Organists website:

AGO Colleague Certification

For organists who have already received service playing certification or have service playing proficiency, the Colleague examination is the next logical step. The CAGO examination consists entirely of your performances, and the examination is like a recital or the musical part of a service of worship, where the organist is expected to perform each item creditably. This examination is designed to test the candidate's ability to demonstrate mastery of all aspects of the organist's art on a given occasion, since this is the demand that is placed upon the professional church musician. The colleague exam is entirely practical and has seven basic requirements that fall into two categories: repertoire and keyboard skills.

- Perform organ literature of moderate difficulty.
- Accompany a choral anthem and a vocal solo.
- Lead and accompany a congregational hymn.
- Sight-read a brief passage of organ music on three staves.
- Harmonize a melody.
- Transpose a hymn-like passage.
- Improvise a simple interlude involving modulation.

The exam consists of two parts, one of which I passed last year, and the other of which, I missed by 2.5 points. This year I passed it easily. It was about a year of preparation, and I am happy to have accomplished it, and I am enjoying the confidence boost it has given me. So many people have extended their congratulations to me, and I am so grateful for the enthusiastic support this congregation has showered me with these past six and a half years you have allowed me to be your organist. I hope to keep improving my skills and adding to your worship experience.

Thank you!
Valerie

JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

By Sue Kanthak, Director of Jeremiah Development

Jeremiah Development has had some exciting events happening! On Saturday, June 22 we partnered with the River District 12 bike ride. Bikers volunteered at the garden as part of the ride! We got many of those "when I get time" chores done! The neighborhood newsletter is an anticipated piece of information in the neighborhood now.



In June while delivering the newsletter, we created a list of properties that were out of City compliance and reported them to our new Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, Barb Chidley, Alderman McNeely, and the neighborhood standards division of the city. Within a few hours, cases were opened on the properties! Our Neighborhood Committee meeting was attended by residents of the Coronado/Haskell neighborhood, Barb Chidley and committee members. It was a great way for the residents to be heard by someone with the authority and willingness to help them! As committee members we were able to hear from the residents the needs of the neighborhood, also. This prompted the inventory of properties we did.

The garden is going gangbusters in this warmth and humidity. Our last Neighborhood Committee meeting was attended by several residents of the neighborhood and We have families come to garden on a regular basis to supplement their food with healthy vegetables. Most recently we had a young man come with his grandma, an older woman who was very carefully picking the collards, and the rhubarb seems to disappear overnight! If you would like to be a part of the future of Jeremiah Development, please let the church office know or contact Sue Kanthak at sue@jeremiahdevelopment.org. Join us in the garden on Saturdays at 9:00 am or help deliver the newsletter! We have volunteer opportunities for everyone, from office help to advocating with agencies for our neighbors!

SERIOUS SOUP RESUMES

Monday, July 15, 11:30 am-12:30 pm

We will be welcoming guests each Monday for Serious Soup. We would love people to stop by, either to help, bring soup or just to see what it is like and to meet some of our neighbors. Join us Mondays!! Contact: becky.erbe@secondfirst.org



TOWER HILL

July 18-21

Join us for a weekend of fellowship enjoyed at the beach, around the campfire. Tower Hill Retreat Center is in Sawyer, Michigan (some campers are going Thursday for extra time). Camping sites are available. Contact: Steve Williams srwilliams55@gmail.com



JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN SATURDAY

July 20, 10:00 am

Make plans now to serve lunch on Saturday, July 20! Marge Maynard will coordinate our efforts and would love to have about 10 happy team members join her. Some of us will start preparing food at 10 am and then the rest can arrive at 11:30 am for serving and clean up. If you have never done this before, now is your chance! Contact: Marge Maynard mtm.home@me.com or 815-980-5304.

ELEMENTARY YOUTH SERVICE DAY! IT'S SERIOUS . . .

Soup that is! On Monday, July 22, we invite the elementary children to participate in a youth service day. We will work with Pastor Becky on a couple of her neighborhood projects. First, the youth will be making shower kits for her to hand out to community shower participants. We will then turn our attention to the Serious Soup program. The kids will make a dessert to hand out, assemble place settings and hand out numbers during the lunch. We will meet at the church at 9:30 and be completed by 12:30. This project is designed for those entering Kindergarten through 5th grade. Please contact Karen Olson, kareno128@comcast.net with any questions.

A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR OF THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT, ANDY NEWGREN

Earlier this week I heard a refugee from the Congo, who has been in the United States since he was teenager, discuss how life in the refugee camp was devoid of hope and he only lived for today; he dared not think of the possibility of tomorrow. I wondered how this young man, now in the United States for almost a decade, would define hope.

Jürgen Moltmann describes hope as anticipated joy opposed to anxiety, which is anticipated terror, something my new refugee friend knew all too well in his previous life. Ricardo Sanín-Restrepo captures the source of rising anxiety witnessed and/or felt by so many of us in today's age writing, "By renouncing God, transcendence, and veiling its own principles, modernity has set forth a paradoxically divine force: its own nihilism."

To be clear, Sanín-Restrepo is not arguing for a theocentric framework or a return to traditional Christian faith, but by identifying the influx of nihilism in today's culture, he presents us with a serious challenge. If you are a Game of Thrones fan (warning, semi-spoilers ahead) you undoubtedly have lots of thoughts on the finale. It seems that in this fictional tale, set in a fantasy world where magic and enchantment exist with a narrative centered on quests for power, violence, and sex, concludes not with the elevation of the powerful - the ones who come out on top, the politically astute and savvy, the winners - but with someone unexpected, someone who believes in purpose.

As I sat in a room listening to how state and local agencies support refugees, I gave thanks for all the ways they move people from terror to joy. The Congolese refugee stated, "if you believe in miracles, I am one." So are all those who set the stage for true joy to break into this nihilistic world.



Congratulations on the marriage of Becky Jacobs to Joe Picchioni. Photo Credit: Suzanne Tennant Photography

UPDATE FROM TRUSTEES MINISTRY TEAM KFACT is coming to Emerson Hall

by Roger Greenlaw, Chariperson Trustees Ministry Team

Gordon Chapel and Emerson Hall make up the southeast corner of our building. This large two story space has been underutilized and is in need of renovation and maintenance. Last year we, the Church, decided to renovate and increase utilization of this wing of our building. We have begun our 'Alternative Service' offering once a month on Sunday afternoons in the Gordon Chapel (lower) level. Church members have cleared out storage areas in Emerson Hall (upper level) and moved the Bells Program to 4th floor chapel, Adult Ed program to 2nd floor (former nursery) and children and youth programming to the Kid's Zone on 3rd floor. Now the Emerson Hall space has been leased (for free) to KFACT for the next 5 years.

KFACT provides mentoring for 250 African American Girls (who live in poverty) from 6th grade through college. Over 10 years, this program has achieved graduation rates of 95-100%. KFACT will pay \$250 per month for support of cleaning and maintenance of the space. KFACT also has agreed to ask the Trade Unions in Rockford to help renovate Emerson Hall over the next few months, by donating time, skills and new materials given by area businesses.

Trustees Ministry Team, with financial support from the Foundation, are installing replacement windows in July. Union Tradesmen will provide electrical and plumbing upgrades in bathrooms and sinks. Wall damage from prior leaks will get plaster repair, and new paint throughout. Office areas will be air-conditioned. Kitchen stove and refrigerator will be upgraded, and a ventilation hood placed above the stove. Cabinets will be cleaned and stained. Lighting will be upgraded. KFACT board members are providing upgrades of Wi-Fi and security equipment as needed for safe entry and exit by the KFACT girls and staff. Union carpenters will bring the balcony railings up to code with remodeling. New donated flooring will be added in the fall when the Union's Apprentices' can participate in the project.

We can all celebrate "Spreading God's Grace in Downtown Rockford and Beyond" as KFACT begins to move into Emerson Hall on June 26 with programs to begin August 1. Thanks to all who helped to make all this happen!

TOOLS & SEEDS FOR SAUT-D'EAU HAITI

by Carolyn Greenlaw, Haiti Interest Group at SecondFirst Church

"Haiti is at a standstill as street clashes continue over demands for ousting of Haiti President Moise." (Miami Herald)

With this unrest in Haiti, we worry about all the people of Haiti and especially our friends in the Casimir's home town of Saut-d'Eau. The citizens continue to struggle in their everyday lives as they provide for their families. SecondFirst Church has sent assistance for the 2019 summer planting season to the people of Saut-d'Eau. This assistance will again be guided by the Casimir family who will be in Haiti during the month of July delivering hand tools and Heritage seeds of corn, beans, rice and squash. Our church has responded to this need by sending \$5,175 toward family food security (Includes \$1,250 from our Mission Ministry Team).

We send our thoughts and prayers of love and caring to the people of Haiti as they continue their struggle for a just and sustainable living. We hope our gifts will help ease their work and 'Spread God's Grace in Downtown Rockford and Beyond' all the way to Saut-d'Eau, Haiti.



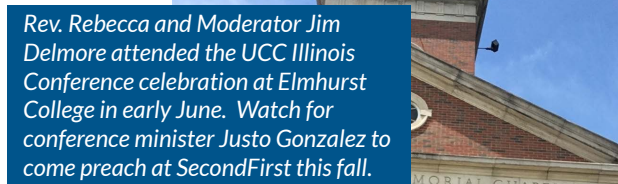
Shannon Kopp of the Rockford Fire Department looks over to partner Cat Lewis of SwedishAmerican during the ADMIT gathering in our dining room.



Rev. Rebecca with Sierra Kellen, the city's project manager for the Family Peace Center, at the strategic planning session.



On behalf of DVT, Jennifer Archer gives fun awards to the Ministry teams for their great progress on our strategic plan.



Rev. Rebecca and Moderator Jim Delmore attended the UCC Illinois Conference celebration at Elmhurst College in early June. Watch for conference minister Justo Gonzalez to come preach at SecondFirst this fall.



A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC PAUL LAPRADE

Multicultural Music in Worship, another discussion (Part Two)

The steps toward a multicultural worship are generally understood by many in the field-there are common steps in the many approaches available to us. First, we need to define and clearly understand who we are and what our musical values are. The wellspring of understanding of "why" traditions exist in our church allows us to find the essence of what must be kept constant (and what can be allowed to fade). Second, we need to identify why we choose to become more diverse musically: Are we trying to reflect a difference in our present congregation? Are we trying to be more inviting to neighbors so that they feel more welcome? Are we trying to express a connection to other people for whom we care? We need to create a sense of need, a sense that we need the very people and culture to whom we are reaching out musically. Third, we need to develop an understanding of the culture(s) toward whom we are opening our hearts; appropriation and mimicking have no room in this process, and inviting people who live musically within other styles is essential to this initiative.

It is important to look at what we are performing. Why are we singing these words? Why is this tempo so slow? In looking at African American music, for example, we need to understand that references to 'water' are often metaphors to the Jordan river/renewal, and also of the use of rivers as a means of safer flight toward freedom from slavery. (There are other metaphors based on water.) We might notice that "Wade in the Water" uses the call-and response form found in the plantation call-and-response styles, and that the tempo seems to 'work right' when it is the approximate speed of large-body motion found in plantation field work. To confront the music fully, we must also take on its history and the meaning. If we do this right, we in turn step into someone else's story and experience-in effect meeting them just as we meet one another through the act of communion.

Does this process involve discomfort? I think it must. We have to be led through the experience and grow through the encounter. At the same time, the result can be transcendent. I am very aware of the fact that music has a circuitous path, and that such a path may be subtle. An example may make us consider this more deeply. Pop singer Paul Simon recently resurrected his song, "American Tune" (written in the early 1970s) in response to his view of the presidency. When it was first written, Simon sang about America and asked, "I wonder what's gone wrong", suggesting that America was damaged by what was occurring at that time. Yet, Paul Simon borrowed this song from a harmonization by J.S. Bach (1723) of a tune written by Hans Leo Hassler (1601) on the German text derived from a Latin text (1200s). What is the hymn about? It is the famous Passion hymn "O Sacred Head, Thou Wounded". Simon's nod toward this hymn draws a deep comparison between the wounding of Christ by thorns and the wounding of America by the compromise of its values. Recognizing this fact transforms our understanding of this song and also possibly suggests that our relationship could be altered to our understanding of its import. Whether or not we accept Simon's perspective, the point I am making is that recognizing the full history and context of a work within culture helps us to understand what is truly being expressed in all its brilliance. (Consider the path that the original text and melody took before it found its reincarnation in Simon's hands!)

Worship should be God-centered. Music is used to magnify some of the paths we may take toward intellectually, emotionally, philosophically, (etc.) considering God's plan for us. Multicultural worship grants us a greater level of communion with the entire church; our willingness and openness to exploring this path can reap the deepest rewards of valuing, understanding, and loving one another more deeply, just as Christ calls us to do.

JULY MUSIC SCHEDULE

JULY 7: "The Amazing Altos" (more altos in the sanctuary than ever!) will bring their low notes to a high point in our service.

JULY 14: Julie Cook Ramirez plays classical guitar beautifully to create a soulful sound in our Sanctuary.

JULY 21: Bob Bates Sunday! SecondFirst Organist Emeritus Robert S. Bates pulls out all the stops for a mid-July organ experience.

JULY 28: Joyce Zartman on bells with Julie Cook Ramirez on guitar present fun duets.



Congratulations to our 2019 Confirmation Class. On June 9th we affirmed these young lives as a part of God's beloved community.



JULY CALENDAR

Monday, July 1

No Park District this week
No Serious Soup

Tuesday, July 2

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
9:00 AM – Free Showers

Wednesday, July 3

No Hospitality Team
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Membership Ministry Team

Thursday, July 4

Office Closed

Friday, July 5

No scheduled activities

Saturday, July 6

10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, July 7

Communion
8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, July 8

8:00 AM – Park District Monday-Friday
No Serious Soup
No Deacons

Tuesday, July 9

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
No Adult Ed
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, July 10

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:00 PM – Trustees

Thursday, July 11

9:30 AM – Free showers

Friday, July 12

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, July 13

9:00AM – Church Clean-up
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
10:00 AM – Job Fair

Sunday, July 14

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
4:00 PM – Alternative Worship

Monday, July 15

11:00AM – Serious Soup Returns

Tuesday, July 16

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Missions Ministry
6:00 PM – Executive Committee

Wednesday, July 17

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, July 18

Tower Hill July 18 - July 21

Friday July 19

No scheduled activities

Saturday, July 20

10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, July 21

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Family CE Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Music Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, July 22

9:30 AM – Elementary Youth Service Day
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, July 23

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
6:00 AM – Earth Care Committee

Wednesday, July 24

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Governing Council

Thursday, July 25

9:30 AM – Free showers
5:30 PM – Governing Council

Friday, July 26

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, July 27

10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, July 28

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Town Hall Meeting
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, July 29

11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, July 30

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers

Wednesday, July 31

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting



These ceramic pet messengers are available in our Fair Trade Shop and can hold a birthday or graduation message or cash.

SUMMER HOURS FOR THRIFT SHOP

For the summer we will be open the first Tuesday of July, and August. These dates are July 2 and August 6 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. Would you like to volunteer? We would love to have you. Contact: Alice Uphouse aliceandralph@comcast.net

GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

STAFF REPORTS

Rev. Rebecca performed a church service in the chapel at Peterson Meadows, worked with John DeWaters to help one of our neighbors, and has met with KFACT and many other committees. She will be on vacation from June 10 to July 8.

Pastor Becky Erbe has been coordinating help to neighbors. Woodside UCC has been donating diapers, but could still use bigger sizes like 5 & 6. She has also been visiting hospitals and searching for grants to continue Serious Soup.

TREASURER REPORT

Jay Baker reported that giving in April was over budget, which helped bring the year-to-date shortfall closer to expenses. We have also had income from the Thrift shop, parking lot and the silent auction for items cleaned out of various places in the church which has helped budget.

TRUSTEES REPORT

Roger Greenlaw reported that progress with KFACT is going well so far. Communications are good and they're working on prioritizing the work that needs to be done. KFACT is planning to move into their offices on June 28 with programming beginning in August. Meetings with the Trade Unions for help have been going well.

OLD BUSINESS

A number of Ad Hoc Committees have been meeting. Strengthening UCC ties between Spring Creek and SecondFirst. Rockford Overnight Café Ad Hoc – committee has met and will be starting with some town hall meetings in July. Ann Stites is assembling a Safe Church Ad Hoc meeting in June.

NEW BUSINESS

UCC General Synod is June 21-25 in Milwaukee. Lenore Lund moved to cover expenses for up to 2 people for 1 day each to attend the General Synod in Milwaukee June 21-25. Roger Greenlaw seconded. The motion passed.

Governing Council manual – a manual with procedures is being created. How to run a meeting, dialing out, reaching Jeff, fire extinguishers, where and how to exit the church in an emergency and other information will be included. Information that pertains to all Ministry Teams will be available for each Ministry Team manual.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Nominating Committee – There were some errors and omissions in the report presented by Nominating at the Annual Meeting. The following motions were made to correct those oversights. John DeWaters moved that an Alternate Member position be created. This position would be approved by the Governing Council on presentation from the Ministry Team Chair. Alternate members would be invited to all meetings and would be allowed a vote if fewer than a full team is present. If the Alternate Member position works out it will be added to the By Laws through the proper procedures. Further John nominates Joanne Johnson to this position for the Mission Ministry Team. Jay seconds. Motion passes, Roger Greenlaw moved that Richard Lierman be named as Alternate to Trustees and Tyler Pratt to Adult Ed. Lenore Lund seconds. Motion Passes.

Roger Greenlaw also moves that Anne Stratemeyer be approved for a position on Missions. Her name was inadvertently left off the presented nominations list. Lenore seconds. Motion passes.

The Nominating Committee and Governing Council apologize to all nominees who were mistakenly missed.

ONE-MINUTE HIGHLIGHTS

- » John DeWaters reported that the first recipient of help from the Bail Program showed up to court on his own. They were able to get him a public defender and investigator and set up meetings. It made a huge difference to the court that his church was standing with him.
- » Haiti Interest Group has raised the \$5000 that was its goal. In the time we've been working with Pouky, 1,400 tools have been distributed to 1,100 people.
- » DVT will take on the naming of the new meeting space, which was the 2nd floor nursery.
- » Next Governing Council meeting is July 25, 5:30 PM.