

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
318 N. Church Street, Rockford IL 61101
(815)963-8431
www.secondfirst.org
www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch/

Non Profit
Organization US
Postage PAID
Permit No. 3734
Rockford, Illinois

JUNE 2019

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



FROM REV. REBECCA'S SERMON
ON SUNDAY MAY 26, FROM THE
LETTER TO THE ROMANS

"What resonates with us more today than the idea of sin is the feeling of not being good enough. I won't ask for a show of hands for who among us feels like we are not good enough. We think we are not smart enough or not kind enough or not brave enough or not young enough or not

old enough.... The list goes on. We too often go day to day thinking we are not good enough. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." That is that feeling: Not good enough. Short of the glory of God. Same thing.

Paul is trying to say, "You are good enough!" You are good enough. Not because of anything you have done, but because God made you and Jesus altered the universe so we can experience salvation every day. By faith you can know you are participating in God's divine plan and give in more deeply and fully than you would if you didn't have faith. "Justified by faith" is just a fancy way of saying, "don't worry, Jesus made it all right for you!" We hear "justify" and cringe thinking it must be like "horrify." But it's not... it means don't worry, Jesus already did everything, now you just get to participate in the radical love and abundant life offered in this here and now salvation.

There is no one beyond the love and grace of God. Not you, not me, not the woman being prostituted, not even the john or the brothel owner. Not the man who struggles with homelessness and had a court date. No one! Jesus has already paved the way. Everyone is good enough to choose the path of abundant life. No one is beyond the grasp of God. Everyone is invited to participate in the family of faith, as dysfunctional as we may be, we try to latch onto what God is doing in this world and allow God to use us to bring about justice and joy. No one is outside of God's grasp of grace, You are good enough! And God will use us to further the plan for here and now salvation.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

alternative WORSHIP

SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

SUNDAY, JUNE 9
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.

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STOP THE MARCH TOWARD WAR WITH IRAN



In 2015, the Obama Administration signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and the other UN Security Council permanent members plus Germany, which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) supported in a 2015 General Assembly resolution. This deal (called the Iran Nuclear Deal) did a lot to slow Iran's path to acquiring nuclear weapons in exchange for sanctions relief, and is consistent with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which the US and Iran are both signatories. However, in May 2018 President Trump decided to pull the US out of the deal. Now, in May 2019, Iran has decided to stop complying fully with the deal as well. Our European allies still have hope for the JCPOA and want it to succeed, but without US involvement, there is a limit to what it can achieve. *Learn more online: www.globalministries.org/stop_the_march_toward_war_with_iran*

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) VENEZUELAN REFUGEES' PLIGHT TUGS AT THE HEART OF MISSION CO-WORKER IN COLOMBIA



LOUISVILLE — Just steps away from the Reformed University campus where he teaches, Presbyterian mission co-worker César Carhuachin comes face to face with some of Colombia's most marginalized people.

He encounters Venezuelan refugees who seek to survive by selling candy on the streets. Earlier this year, the United Nations estimated that 3.4 million Venezuelans have fled their homeland, where political repression has created severe economic hardship and pervasive shortages of food and medicine. *Read more online: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org>*

SAVE THE DATES

July 2: Thrift Shop Open
July 4: Office Closed
July 14: Alternative Worship
July 18: Tower Hill
July 20: Jubilee Soup Kitchen
July 22: Serious Soup Returns

SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June 2: Communion
Rev. Rebecca White Newgren Preaching

June 9: Pentecost
Rev. Rebecca White Newgren Preaching

June 16: Father's Day
Father David Beauvais Preaching

June 23: Mission Trip Sunday
Youth Preaching

June 30
Rev. Norm Shirk Preaching

A NOTE FROM ASSISTANT PASTOR OF MEMBER CARE AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Every once in a while it is important to remind people of things. There are activities or events that happen regularly, or daily tasks that become so routine we can do them in our sleep. Sometimes we get in such a routine that we forget to tell others about what is going on in our lives.

There are other things that happen suddenly, that takes us out of our routine, like an illness, hospitalization or an event where you need pastoral care. These are the times your pastors want to be there for you.

It has been mentioned before, but doesn't hurt to say it again. With all the new Hippa rules and regulations hospitals no longer are able to call the church if you experience a hospital stay, or if you are in need of pastoral care. Rebecca and I can do some pretty cool things, but mind reading isn't one of them. So please, if you would like a visit or call, let us know so we can care for you. Our church is so much more than just church. We are community. We are family. We want to be there for you.

Blessings to all,
Pastor Becky E

CAR WASH SUNDAY

Sunday, June 2 after worship

While we appreciate the generous donations towards our Mission Trip for the youth to travel to Nashville this summer with our May envelope drive, we are fitting in one more service event fundraiser before we take off on the open road. Join us after church and get your vehicle cleaned by our youth as they earn their way to another wonderful giving experience. Any donation amount is welcomed! Contact: aubrey.burnett@secondfirst.org

YOUTH MISSION TRIP

June 15-23

We will be taking a group of seven teens to Nashville TN during the month of June for our mission trip work through the YouthWorks program. We anticipate serving children, the elderly, those with special needs, and the homeless among other projects during our week there! Students will be asked to reflect about what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ, as we enjoy the opportunities afforded to us to grow in faith by the generous support of the many members of SecondFirst. We hope to fit in a few sights and sounds of the great town of country music, like the Grand Ole Opry and Music Row. Look for pictures to celebrate the memories in an upcoming newsletter! Contact: aubrey.burnett@secondfirst.org

CONFIRMATION

Sunday, June 9

Join us to celebrate our class of 2019 confirming students. We will lay hands, hear statements of faith, and be filled with joy as we once again affirm these young lives as a part of God's beloved community. Contact: aubrey.burnett@secondfirst.org



Confirmands work with their mentors on their statements of faith.

SUNDAY SCHOOL KICKOFF

Begins Sunday, June 2

Are you ready to ROAR? Summer Sunday School kicks off on June 2nd. We will explore God's goodness and celebrate a ferocious faith that will power us through this wild life. Remember life is wild but God is good! Any questions, please Contact: dyan.lofgren@secondfirst.org or aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org.



THANK YOU, MS. DYAN!

Dyan Lofgren, our Children's Ministry Coordinator, after three years with us is moving to North Carolina. We are so grateful for her love and shaping our kids and wish her all the best on her new adventure. Please join to celebrate Dyan after worship on June 2. Her last day is June 9 and Ms. Aubrey will lead all the kids this summer.

YOUTH SERVICE DAY

Friday, June 7, 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Family Christian Education is inviting the youth of the church, ages 12 and older, to participate in a service day. We will work along with the greater Rockford community in the Heartland Church Sharefest activities. Our activities this year will be at the YMCA Children's Learning Center on Glenwood Avenue. Please sign up with Karen Olson, karen128@comcast.net or with Debbie in the office, debbie.wise@secondfirst.org.

PENTECOST/STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING

Sunday, June 9

SecondFirst Church, as part of both the UCC and PC(USA) denominations, participates in 4 special offerings during the calendar year. On June 9 we will receive the Pentecost/ Strengthen the Church offering. The money we collect supports youth, among other areas, and helps them form a foundation of faith. 40% of the offering supports programs in local communities. Please be generous with your gift. You can use the special envelopes or indicate this offering in the memo section of your check. Thank you!

DONUTS FOR DAD

Sunday, June 16 following Worship

The Hospitality Team is serving donuts in the dining room after church on Father's day. Join us to celebrate all the dads we have known, with a delicious donut and coffee.

FIREWORKS AT LARSONS'

Saturday, June 29 6:30 pm

Get a head start on celebrating Independence Day! Join the Fellowship Ministry team and Dick and Donna Larson for a potluck meal and fireworks at the Larsons' home at 4971 Dunbarton Pkwy. Bring your patriotic or favorite potluck dish, along with your own table service. Fireworks start at dusk, so bring chairs or a blanket. Questions? Contact: Arlene Noel 779-221-7716

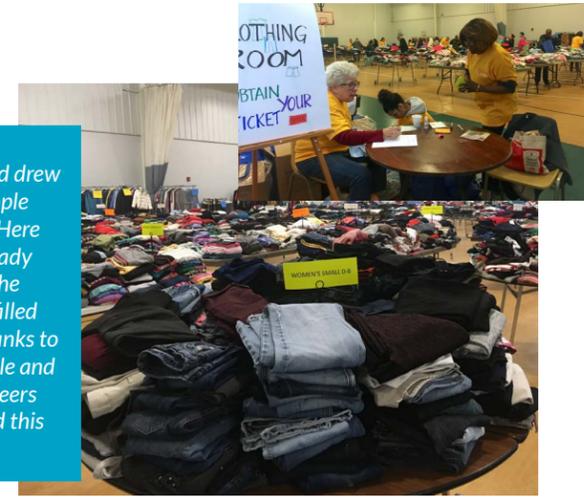


SOUP KITCHEN

Saturday, July 20

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.

Love Rockford drew over 400 people for services. Here volunteers ready to hand out the clothes that filled our gym. Thanks to Darlene Riddle and all the volunteers who prepared this blessing.



A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR OF THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT, ANDY NEWGREN

I have centered my meals this week around Easter dinner leftovers and dutifully eaten my fair share of hard boiled eggs for breakfast, but other elements of Easter Sunday have faded as life continues, deadlines creep up, and new projects and tasks are added to the calendar and to-do list. Today, like almost all days, we can ask what does the resurrection mean and why does it matter. Not today in the general sense of the present, but in the immediacy of right now. Unless you are fortunate to work in unusual environments, the horns of Easter Sunday are absent, the call and response of "He is risen. He is risen indeed," does not echo off the walls, and gorgeous spring flowers do not magically appear on your desk or in the hallways.

Being an Easter people requires a lot. The Easter experience, for me, does not include the risen Christ whispering my name so I recognize him, mysteriously appearing and disappearing at my dinner table, or striking me down off my iron horse. Instead the Easter experience, for many of us, is captured in the male disciples' moment of fear and uncertainty following the resurrection before Mary proclaims the good news to them. Resurrection is real and vivid in the world; but they had yet to experience it. Charles Taylor writes in *The Secular Age*, we have transitioned from "a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace." The resurrection, however, does not need our belief, our acknowledgment, or our words of praise. Easter may feel far away for you already; it was for the disciples, too.

The question to ask ourselves, as one friend asked me this week, is where is the resurrected Christ appearing today? And do we have the courage to go there? This week I've been praying I/you/we have all the courage we need to go where new life awaits from places where despair eradicated hope.

GOVERNING COUNCIL

Thank you Steve Showers for being the chair of the Governing Council for the past year. Wit and wisdom has been his trademark. His final statement was that he wanted the next meeting to continue on as smoothly as possible.

Highlights from the April meeting:

- Rebecca reported that we had a fantastic Holy Week and the staff is doing great work.
- Serious Soup is averaging 54-56 guests.
- Love Rockford took place May 11th. At the time of this writing Love Rockford was a huge success.
- Kidzone is looking really nice. On May 12th We all had Muffins With Mom on the 3rd floor – it was fantastic!
- KFACT lease has been signed
- Deaconesses have approved changing their name to the Hospitality Ministry Team. Additional work will be needed before the name can officially be changed.
- Dates and Activities to Remember:
 - Blackhawk Presbytery June 4 at Stronghold
 - Governing Council Retreat May 31
 - UCC IL Conference June 7-8
 - UCC General Synod, Milwaukee June 21-25

A NOTE FROM MODERATOR JIM DELMORE

Many of you witnessed that I had received a gift from Steve Showers. I should have opened it so everyone could see the journal and bookmark that I received. The journal is a beautiful hardcover book with the inscription "On Wings Like Eagles" The bookmark says Keep Calm and Pray. Good advice that I will see every time I write in my journal this year. One of the entries that I have recorded is about the volunteering that is done at our church. I was impressed with all the work that goes into setting up the thrift Shop and the ministry that it provides. Serious Soup could not happen without all those volunteers providing food and labor. Love Rockford was a success because of all of the volunteers that helped setup and work during the event. Many volunteers were needed to clean out Emerson Hall for KFACT. The list goes on.

There is a satisfaction in working with someone you don't know, because after a short time you do know them. As the summer progresses we will have a chance to work outside on the grounds or help with the Pig Roast. Every one of the volunteer jobs is a ministry for our church, or the people that our church helps. Please take the time to volunteer even if it is for a short time.

STAY UP TO DATE ON CURRENT NEWS & EVENTS.
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

 facebook.com/SecondFirstChurch

 twitter.com/second1stchurch



Shamika Williams, executive director of KFACT, sitting down to sign the agreement to use Emerson Hall.



The Sanctuary Choir with strings and brass warming up for Easter.



Peanuts Bells encourage us in worship.



Staff thank you fun after Lenten Season



Attendees at the Environmental Fair

A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC PAUL LAPRADE

Multicultural Music in Worship, another discussion (Part One)

Sandra Maria van Osptal's book, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* is a fascinating and convincing call for a worship style that embraces many cultures. Her primary argument for including many styles and elements of different cultures is that such an adoption allows us to strengthen the connection between our local church/congregation and that of the global, wider church.

As I look back into my music-related church experiences, I value the different ways in which Christianity has been revealed to me through the diversity of the environments I encountered. Liturgy was most poignantly revealed to me through my experiences in the French Canadian Catholic tradition of my childhood and early adulthood. In my teens and early 20s, my experiences widened greatly, as a broader experience in leading a Christian praise band (very simple yet charismatic music) was complemented by the study of Bach cantatas and how their performance in a Lutheran church was an expression of how deeply faithful the offering of learned excellence could be toward giving 'the best to the Highest' (Bach's expression). My experience as a frequent visitor to an AME church in college opened yet another world to me, where personal, charismatic worship emphasized making a continuous personal choice to follow God. And at Westminster Choir College, we were introduced to a different denominational approach in every week of every academic year within a weekly chapel/worship time. In each situation, the music, and the way in which it was presented and learned by the choir and cantor, mirrored the social culture of the congregation and of the faith culture in which it operated. Being a musician, I was keenly aware of the differences between these styles, but my faith found love and expression in every language through which I could feel the Spirit speak.

Differences in style are related to many other factors, including issues of tradition and generational issues. Some of us value reading hymns in four-part harmony, while others wish for easily repeated phrases and musical motives which can almost act as a mantra and connect with us in a different manner. Some of us are moved by the music, others by words. Familiar melodies can help some to feel comfort, connection, and welcome, but for others the repetition of these melodies or words can lull one into disconnection and a feeling of mindless habit-for these people, the challenge of a new song, new approach, or new experience is what can be the determinant of a meaningful connection of faithful experience through music. The point is, however, that people often become mired in the discussion of what is 'right' or 'wrong', or 'better' and 'worse' rather than opening oneself to the possibility offered by a composition to enhance, explicate, or engender a deeper relationship to God's Word.

In stepping toward a more inclusive and multicultural musical experience, the issue is really not one about erasing or removing the old, but rather about making room for the new (to us). What we currently have is good and meaningful to us, yet might we also find meaning and be challenged in our faith by what is different and new?

In next month's segment, I will outline the considerations that professionals in the field of music ministry recognize to be essential to worshiping with a multicultural way.

JUNE MUSIC SCHEDULE

Although the plans may change by the time this reaches press (this is being written on 8 May), here is the exciting outline for our services' musical journey during June:

JUNE 2 - Valerie Blair Sunday! - The inimitable stylings of Valerie Blair on organ and piano fill our service with joy!

JUNE 9 - Pentecost with the Sanctuary Choir - A celebration of water and the Spirit, musically driven by our sanctuary choir.

JUNE 16 - "Forged in Faith", a group with Vanessa Nieva, Julie Cook Ramirez, Doug Phillips, Val Blair, and others bring their love of contemporary church music to the fore.

JUNE 23 - "The Church Street String Band" brings American folk styles to our church in a 'clapping and finger-snapping' service.

JUNE 30 - "The Brass" - the amazing brass instrumentalists from our congregation offer their annual contribution to our service.



Beth Stites-deSteiguer was ordained at SecondFirst Church on Saturday, May 25!



JUNE CALENDAR

Saturday, June 1
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
 11:00 AM – Harnois Memorial Service
 2:00 PM – Wedding

Sunday, June 2 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
 11:15 AM – Youth Car Wash

Monday, June 3
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup
 12:00 PM – Adult Education Ministry Team

Tuesday, June 4
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Presbytery at Stronghold
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 12:00 PM – Bible Study

Wednesday, June 5
 9:00 AM – Deaconesses
 1:00 PM – Admit Rockford
 5:30 PM – Membership Ministry Team

Thursday, June 6
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting
 6:00 PM – KFACT Fundraiser

Friday, June 7
 IL Conference UCC Celebration
 Elmhurst

Saturday, June 8
 IL Conference UCC Celebration
 Elmhurst
 10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, June 9 Pentecost Confirmation Sunday
 8:30 AM – Confirmation Breakfast
 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, June 10
 8:00 AM – Park District Monday-Friday
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup
 5:00 PM – Deacons

Tuesday, June 11
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 No Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, June 12
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
 5:00PM – Trustees

Thursday, June 13
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, June 14
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 15
 Mission Trip to Nashville return June 23
 9:00 AMBUCS distributes bikes to kids
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, June 16 Father’s Day
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Donuts for Dad
 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, June 17
 No Serious Soup

Tuesday, June 18
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 No Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 12:00 PM – Bible Study
 5:00 PM – Missions Ministry
 No Executive Committee

Wednesday, June 19
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 20
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, June 21-25
 UCC General Synod Milwaukee

Saturday, June 22
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, June 23
 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, June 24
 No Serious Soup

Tuesday, June 25
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 No Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Shower
 7:00 PM – Book Study

Wednesday, June 26
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 27
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 No Governing Council
 6:00 PM – RUM Annual Dinner

Friday, June 28
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 29
 6:30 PM – Fireworks & Potluck at Larson’s

Sunday, June 30
 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

SUMMER HOURS FOR THRIFT SHOP

For the summer we will be open the first Tuesday of June, July, and August. These dates are June 4, 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

RING IN SPRING 2019: AN AFTERNOON OF MUSIC AND MISSION

By Julie Cook Ramirez, Director of Handbell Ministries

Ring in Spring weekend got off to a decidedly un-springlike start, with several inches of heavy, wet snow blanketing the region. By the time Sunday afternoon rolled around, however, the temperature had risen and the snow had melted – just in time for the concert! This year’s event featured a wide array of music, including many fun selections. From Bellcantos’ spirited rendition of “My Favorite Things” and the Peanut Ringers’ adorable presentation of “The Rainbow Connection”, to Carillons’ sparkly version of the Sesame Street theme, and the Martin Ringers’ driving performance of the Adele hit “Rolling in the Deep,” the concert kept the audience on the edge of their seats.

As always, we pride ourselves on presenting our music with a mission. This year, we focused on the crisis at the southern border. While she couldn’t be with us in person, local attorney Linda Zuba sent a video message, describing the situation she has witnessed firsthand in Tijuana. We learned additional details from Dana Yarek, a local man who has travelled with Linda to the border. Vocalist Vanessa Nieva helped us share our message of love and hope with a heartfelt performance of “What the World Needs Now Is Love,” joined by Valerie Blair, Doug Phillips, Terry Mohaupt, and myself. A few ringers even joined in to sing backup. Thanks to the generosity of the audience, we presented Linda with a check for \$1,718, which will go to the Al Otro Lado Border Rights Project to help provide legal assistance to asylum seekers seeking legal entry to the United States. That included the \$250 winning bid on Rebecca Taylor’s amazing artwork.



LOVE ROCKFORD

Sue Kanthak, Director of Jeremiah Development

“Love, Hope, Being Kind, Meeting, Talking and Understanding mental health needs.” This is what one guest said when we asked him what LOVE Rockford meant to him. As of this writing we don’t have the final numbers; however we do know that 792 face-to-face contacts were made between our guests and the non-profit social services that were onsite to provide lasting help. That’s 792 opportunities to improve lives. Several agencies made follow-up appointments with our guests, continuing the relationship started during LOVE Rockford. With over 30 social services and mental and physical health services, food, clothing, haircuts, and bike repair available, much organization and planning were needed. This could not happen without the generosity of the downtown churches and the overwhelming support from the volunteers during the event and the months leading up to it. Thank you to everyone who helped bring love, hope, kindness, conversation and understanding to those in our community who are the most underserved.

A BIG THANK YOU!

We are very grateful to everyone who assisted in the success of LOVE Rockford 2019. Whether you took a lead role, worked on a committee, volunteered on May 11, or held us in your prayers, we thank you. SecondFirst Church provided many, many volunteer hours over the past several weeks and months. Thanks be to God for your kind hearts, willing hands, and the generous giving of your time and talents. -The LOVE Rockford Team



PILGRIM PARK RECAP BY DAVE NOEL

Pilgrim Park –The fast flowing creek, red blooming trilliums and greening of the woodland and yards reaffirmed that spring has arrived at Pilgrim Park. Seven volunteers from SecondFirst assisted the staff last Saturday in burning winter fallen limbs, dead trees and invasive honeysuckle. The volunteers joined a 30 plus group of confirmands and chaperones from Glenview IL, and over a dozen scrapbook hobbyists at noon lunch. The confirmands were especially interested in the landscape fire, our tools, and the visual benefits of a few hours of park maintenance. Pilgrim Park, an Illinois UCC facility, is full of life and conversation and ready for youth and adult reflection and enrichment.