

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

AUGUST 2019

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace

A WORD FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Hello Church,

I hope this reaches you have a lovely summer. My family and I were able to visit ten national parks and monuments earlier this summer: Badlands, Wind Cave, Devil's Tower, Grand Teton, Yellowstone, Glacier/Waterton, and Roosevelt were the highlights (for those of you who are National Parks junkies). I was reminded of God's love and grace and the expansive beauty of our great nation at every turn.



When we visited the Crazy Horse monument, I was awed by the size of the sculpture. They boast that when it is complete, it will be the largest sculpture in the world. We watched the obligatory video there, but something caught my attention that I keep thinking about. Henry Standing Bear wanted to acknowledge the contribution of the native chiefs to this great land. Frustrated that the great Crazy Horse was not being added to Mt. Rushmore, he turned to Polish-American sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, who had helped with Mt. Rushmore. Ziolkowski was a young man at the time, and in his own words and letters, Standing Bear asked him to spend the rest of his life leading a team to sculpt Crazy Horse into the side of a mountain.

Talk about vocation! That is what God does for us (and don't we wish it was always this clear). God comes to us and calls us to specific ways of life, pastimes and sometimes careers. Vocation is how we use our time to worship and honor God and to love one another.

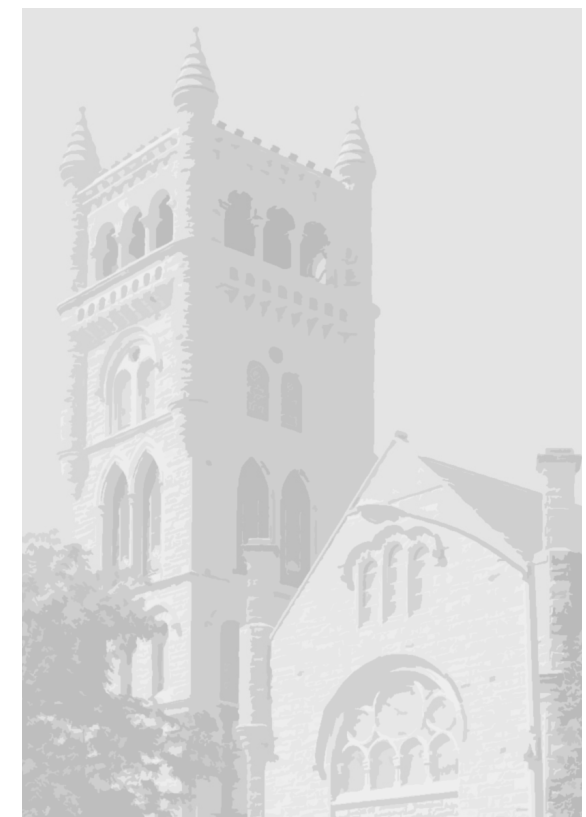
When Standing Bear called Ziolkowski, he said yes and spent the rest of his life sculpting. Let us pray that when God calls us (and God does call each one of us), we can respond with the same confidence and determination.

I am grateful we are all called by God together to worship and serve as SecondFirst Church.

Peace be with you,
Rebecca

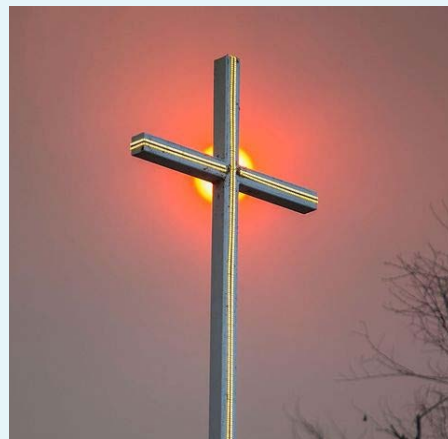
SAVE THE DATES

September 3: Thrift Shop returns
September 7: Jubilee Soup Kitchen
September 8: Sunday School Kickoff
September 8: Alternative Worship
September 10: Presbytery Oswego
September 14: Turkey Roast
September 21: Pig Roast



NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST UCC'S GENERAL SYNOD FIRST CHRISTIAN BODY TO ENDORSE GREEN NEW DEAL



The Green New Deal has picked up endorsements from two major Christian groups, signaling a growing base of support among the faithful as climate change projections look increasingly apocalyptic.

The national deliberative body of the United Church of Christ, a mainline Protestant sect with nearly 825,000 adherents and close to 4,900 congregations across the United States, also voted to endorse the Green New Deal. It called the policy framework "what is needed to preserve and restore God's great gift of creation."

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) PRESBYTERIAN PEACEMAKING PROGRAM'S 'STANDING OUR HOLY GROUND' PREMIERES AT PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH EVENT



As Kaaleah J. from the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia spoke, photos of her father appeared on a screen above the stage in Purdue University's Eliza Fowler Hall and he could be heard rapping, "When I'm gone, will they remember me?" Kaaleah was keeping her father's memory alive as well as the violent way he died when a casual meeting with a friend turned to gun fire. She was only a toddler at the time, but on Friday afternoon, the high school student was telling the story of his tragic death in a shooting and her efforts to combat gun violence as a panelist...

Read more online: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/>



Big thanks to the hardworking volunteers who helped with our church clean-up on July 13th!



www.secondfirst.org

UPDATE ON KFACT'S MOVE INTO EMERSON HALL

This month SecondFirst Church welcomes KFACT to Emerson Hall. KFACT provides mentoring for 250 Girls from 6th grade through college. Over 10 years, this program has achieved graduation rates of 95-100%.

KFACT began moving furniture into Emerson Hall on June 26 in the midst of our renovations. At the moment this is a crowded busy place! The pictures show the installation crew from Window World replacing the windows. During July, what will become the program's staff office area, the kitchen and bathrooms have had plaster repaired and fresh paint. Offices await window air conditioners and LED lights. KFACT added their own WIFI system. Office flooring will be installed next while kitchen cabinets are being sanded and stained. Newer stove and refrigerator have been purchased and ready to move into place, with the addition of a ventilation hood above the stove. Donated new kitchen faucet, bathroom toilets and plumbing fixtures will be replaced soon.

During this month's progress, special thanks goes to the efforts of Alice Uphouse, Jim Delmore, Jeff Byrne, Ramon Moreno, and many others who lent a hand or expertise.

KFACT Director Shamika Williams and her staff are eager to move into their offices and begin preparing for their programs that begin for the girls in mid-August.

We celebrate "Spreading God's Grace in Downtown Rockford and Beyond" as KFACT moves into Emerson Hall. Thank you to the congregation for support of this huge project during the past year and to all who donated time to make it all happen!

Roger Greenlaw, Chairperson Trustees Ministry Team
Rgreen97@aol.com, 815-262-1776



JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

By Sue Kanthak, Director of Jeremiah Development

Jeremiah Development is in full swing this summer. The garden is thriving with this heat! (possibly the only thing enjoying it!) Awareness of the garden and its purpose has grown because of our neighborhood newsletter. This past spring, we had many neighbors ask when the vegetables will be ready to pick. Some have joined us to weed and care for the garden. We have a steady stream of people utilize the garden on Saturday mornings while we are weeding. They ask questions about unfamiliar vegetables and after some informal education they grab a bag and give it a try. We see the garden used at various times of the day during the week, also. Our irrigation hoses are trying very hard to last one more summer but may be losing the battle. We have two volunteers who are keeping the hoses alive for us.



We continue to deliver our monthly newsletter door-to-door. While delivering it we assess City of Rockford property code violations and report them to the city. We reported seven properties for unmowed lawns and tall weeds in June. When we delivered the newsletter in July, all properties were in compliance! We added a "Meet Your Neighbor" section to the newsletter. We interview residents and highlight them in the newsletter. It's easier to say "hello" to your neighbor if you already know their name. The newsletter has been a wonderful opportunity to cross Court Street and have real conversations with our neighbors. If you would like to make a concrete difference in the lives of those living in the Jeremiah area, consider walking the neighborhood with us.

On Sept 14th we will host a "Movie In The Park" night in Haskell Park. We will show a family movie and provide snacks and drinks. On Nov. 2nd we are partnering with Blue Cross Blue Shield to have a Community Health Fair. It will be in the gym at SecondFirst Church. We hope this will become a yearly event.

With everything happening, Jeremiah Development is looking for volunteers! We have a variety of opportunities so there is something for everyone! Whether you volunteer for an hour once or on a regular basis, your help is appreciated.

Don't forget: Follow us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/JeremiahDevelopment

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY BRIDGE CLINIC

Saturdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

The Bridge Clinic Reception Desk is looking for Volunteers, Saturdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Frequency is once a month or every other month or less often on an as needed basis. All you need is a friendly smile, caring attitude and the ability to engage in conversation. The Bridge Clinic would love to have you as a volunteer! Contact: Holly Beeman 815-964-7239 (leave message if no answer).

SECONDFIRST HOSTS 2019 CROP RALLY

Saturday, August 24, 8:30 am

This year's CROP Hunger Walk Rally will host a breakfast in our dining room. Each year the CROP Hunger Walk Committee invites pastors and members of Rockford Area congregations to renew their involvement in this annual Walk. Exciting news about Church World Service, Catholic Charities and The Greater Rockford Pantry Coalition will be shared. Walking materials will be described and distributed.

Contact: Dave Jones davidj6226@aol.com

JEREMIAH CHURCHES ANNUAL JOINT WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, August 25, 10:00

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Please join us for our annual worship service that includes the Congregations of Court Street Methodist, Emmanuel Episcopal, Shalom and SecondFirst churches. The worship will be hosted by Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

SAVE THE DATE!!! SEPTEMBER 14TH

Jeremiah Development is hosting Movies in the Park on September 14th! This will be an evening event at Haskell Park with food provided by United Way. We would love to have volunteers to help organize the evening and assist the day of the event. If you are interested in helping plan a really fun event or can help the day of, please contact Sue Kanthak @ sue@jeremiahdevelopment.org or (815)980-6358. We will be partnering with United Way for food, fun and more! Details will follow.



ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

Sunday, August 18 after Worship

Celebrate summer with food, fun and fellowship! Join us Sunday, August 18 following worship at Anna Page Park Shelter House for our Annual Church Picnic. The Fellowship Team will provide brats, buns, condiments, table service and beverages. What can you do? Bring a dish to pass and join us! Contact: Linda Mohaupt @ mommoh54@gmail.com

SUMMER MUSIC REVISITED ECHO IS COMING! WHAT IS AN ECHO?

ECHO is the 'rehearing' of sound as it is reflected from an opposing surface. ECHO is also the name of a performing group that will grace our August 18th service.

ECHO stands for Ecumenical Community Handbell Organization. Begun in 2016, it is a group of experienced ringers who seek to promote the art of handbell ringing in the Rockford Illinois area. Their ringers come from 8 different churches and denominations (including ours!) and meet monthly at Westminster Presbyterian Church here in Rockford. The group recently organized as a Not For Profit Charitable Foundation with the hopes of attracting donors interested in supporting their efforts to promote this art form.

The president of the group is Rob Wandell (of JuBellee festival fame); Dianne Londo is the artistic director. SecondFirst members include Joyce Zartman, Bill Zartman, and Nancy Marvell. They will present rousing versions of the Battle Hymn of the Republic and of the beloved Brazilian folk song, Cantad al Señor at our August 18th service.

Paul Laprade, Music Director



SERIOUS SOUP NEWS

After a four-week break for our tireless volunteers, Serious Soup was up and running again on July 15. We were missed. A total of 72 guests came for soup. Thank you to all who have come out and helped. Our youngest church members also joined in to help. They prepared silverware and napkins, made delicious "Puppy Chow" for our guests, handed out numbers and boxes of cereal. They went table to table to personally hand a bag of Puppy Chow to each guest who wanted one. They worked hard and that work was appreciated by all!

2019 UCC ILLINOIS CONFERENCE 55TH ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

by Jim Delmore, Moderator

Held on June 7th and 9th at Elmhurst College. The theme was "LOVE in Action Life Together". Reverend Chuck Maney the Conference President's report was exciting and inspiring. The sermon given by Reverend Justo Gonzalez II, the Interim Conference Minister was beyond fantastic. He literally had people dancing in the isle. Reverend Justo Gonzalez II, will visit SecondFirst Church later this year. Each of the Associations presented words of welcome and encouragement for all. There are five Associations. We are in the Prairie Association.

There were displays promoting many of the conference supported activities along with a few vendors. Out Door Ministries (ODM), Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and Peace & Justice to name a few of the displays. Information about the UCC Disaster Ministries and Sustaining Creation was picked up. I will share more information about these and other programs later. Music, hymns and announcements were sprinkled in between parts of the business meeting. One of the hymns was "We Are Marching". Thanks to our music ministry I felt right at home singing. One of the Break-out sessions that I attended was "Agreeing to Disagree" it reviewed many ways to find a common ground, or be respectful and still make your point.

The special offering was taken for Outdoor Ministries which goes to our church camps. Tower Hill is building a new retreat center across from the three cabins that were finished last year. The new retreat Center should be finished in August. Pilgrim Park is exploring the possibility of having a capital campaign to add on to the Conference Center. Pilgrim Park is close to operating in the black. One of the problems is that they don't have room for all of the groups that want to use the facilities. The proposed conference center renovations and additions would allow them to host more groups. SecondFirst has been a strong supporter of Pilgrim Park. Hopefully we will be able to help them with this project.

A copy of the annual report with committee reports will be in the church office. Thank you for letting me attend the 2019 Illinois Conference 55th Annual Celebration as a delegate of SecondFirst Church.

ROAR INTO SUMMER!

by Aubrey Barnett, Youth Director

Our summer Sunday school curriculum, Roar, has been a real hit with the kids. So far, we have learned the stories from the Old Testament of Moses freeing the slaves from Egypt and his parting of the Red Sea. Through the lessons they are encouraged to remember that even when things seem unfair, scary, or unknown, "God is good!".

Our children have made bricks from sand, shared about times in their life they felt afraid and what helped them feel safe, and of course collected cool key chain animals to remind them of the important lessons which match the Roar safari theme. We start each Sunday school week with a song and dance to a kids worship music video, and we look forward to sharing a song, from our time together this summer during the Blessing of the Backpacks on August 18th. God is Good, Hallelujah and Amen!

SAVE THE DATE!

Blessing of the Backpacks | Sunday, August 18, 10:00 am

As we prepare for the start of a new school year, we invite anyone heading back to school to join us for the Blessing of the Backpacks. Contact: aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org



Alice Uphouse tells the Trustees about the cabinets being refinished in Emerson Hall.



The Foundation is having work done to fix the stone falling off the tower.



Seven teens from our church went to Nashville, TN for mission trip work through the YouthWorks program.



Julie Cook Ramirez blesses us with her musical talents playing the guitar during service.

SUNDAY MUSIC IN AUGUST

August 4 - Debbie Wise

Our secretary not only does so many wonderful things for us (producing the worship bulletin is only one of many tasks), but she also graces us annually with her spirit-filled soprano voice. This year, Debbie will sing two of the church's favorite contemporary hymns.

August 11 - Elizabeth LaGrande O'Leary

True contralto voices are relatively rare, and rarer still are skillful, trained contralto voices. Liz will sing soulful works for our service, brought to life through her lovely contralto sound.

August 18 - ECHO/Dorothy Paige Turner

How can a well-respected bell group and a beloved singer fill the sanctuary with music? ECHO presents two classic works for bells, and Dorothy will perform selections--one seldom heard--for this exciting service.

August 25 - Four Church Ecumenical Service (to be held at Emmanuel Episcopal Church)

Our annual ecumenical service will feature all of our choirs, combined to sing music by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

alternative WORSHIP

SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11

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. Join us!



The Trustees had the windows replaced in Emerson Hall... it looks like new!



The church was abuzz as we might be one of the locations in a SwedishAmerican commercial celebrating Rockford.



We shot a scene like movie stars of the pastors greeting people coming out the front doors.



It was hot outside but cool inside the Jubilee Center as our team members prepared lunch for our neighborhood friends. Thank you to all who helped!



Kids at "Elementary Youth Service Day" helped to make "puppy chow" for Serious Soup.

AUGUST CALENDAR

Thursday, August 1
9:30 AM – Free Showers

Friday, August 2
No scheduled activities

Saturday, August 3
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, August 4
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, August 5
8:00 AM – Park District Monday-Friday
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, August 6
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
8:30 AM – Chapel at Wesley Willows
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers

Wednesday, August 7
9:00 AM – Hospitality Team
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Membership

Thursday, August 8
9:30 AM – Free showers

Friday, August 9
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, August 10
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, August 11
8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Town Hall Meeting and Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Music Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Family CE Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
4:00 PM – Alternative Worship

Monday, August 12
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:00 PM – Deacons

Tuesday, August 13
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
12:00 PM – Adult Ed
5:00 PM – Foundation
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, August 14
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
11:00 AM – Advent Planning Meeting
5:00 PM – Trustees

Thursday, August 15
8:00 AM – Poverty Simulation
No Free showers

Friday, August 16
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, August 17
8:30 AM – Fellowship Ministry Team Meeting
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, August 18
Blessing of the Backpacks
8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Church Picnic Anna Page Park
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, August 19
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, August 20
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Missions Ministry Team
6:00 PM – Executive Committee

Wednesday, August 21
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 22
9:30 AM – Free Showers
5:30 PM – Governing Council

Friday August 23
5:30 PM – Wedding Rehearsal

Saturday, August 24
8:30 AM – CROP Breakfast
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
3:00 PM – Wedding

Sunday, August 25
10:00 AM – Joint Service Emmanuel Episcopal

Monday, August 26
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

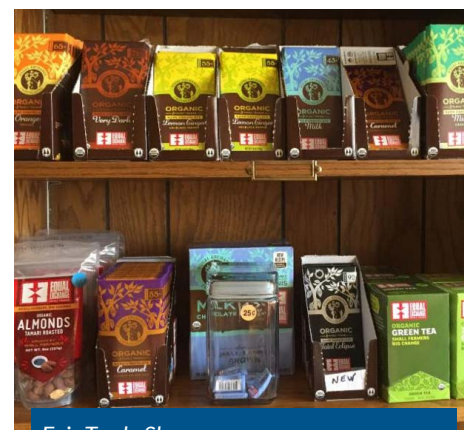
Tuesday, August 27
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
Summit of Hope
No Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Free Showers
6:00 PM - Earth Care Committee

Wednesday, August 28
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 29
9:30 AM – Free showers

Friday, August 30
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, August 31
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic



Fair Trade Shop
Annual Candy Sale: 3 for \$9.00
Good time to stock up on your favorites.

NEIGHBORHOOD NUMBERS June 15 - July 15, 2019

- Showers - 14
- Bus tokens - 15
- Diaper closet - 2
- Laundry help - 1
- Help with rent and utilities - 2

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL IN ROCKFORD AND SAUT-D’EAU, HAITI

We are in the middle of a real summer here in Rockford and yet are beginning to see articles and ads about returning to school in the fall. As we ready ourselves for another school year, we also turn our attention to Haiti as they prepare and hope to send their children back to school this fall. Haiti’s literacy rate of about 61% for males and 57% for females is well below the average rate of 90% for all Latin American and Caribbean countries. The country faces shortages in educational supplies and qualified teachers, with the rural population being less educated than the urban. The children of Haiti are no different from the children in America except that Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and the third poorest country in the world.



Last year SecondFirst Church raised funds for education in Saut-d’Eau, Haiti and helped send 52 students to school. Many families can pay some but not all of the \$250 expense for a child’s year in school. We paid \$8,367 toward tuition, books, backpacks, meals and uniforms that cost \$250 per child per year. We are again having our Education Fund Drive for Saut-d’Eau kids, and hope to retain those 52 students in school again this year, and we will strive to add additional numbers of students if possible.

The Haiti Interest Group will present the Adult Education program in Koffee Klass on Sunday August 18th at 8:45 am. We will include a report back from the Casimir’s who are in Saut-d’Eau during the month of July again this year. This Haiti progress report will cover the impact of our Tools and Seeds project last spring and our plans for back to school this fall. Please consider supporting a student during our Haiti Education Fund Drive during the month of August and join us on the 18th as the Casimir’s share results from our support of their home town of Saut-d’Eau.

If you would like to support our education program in Haiti, you may send a check to the office marked Haiti School Project in the memo line. Questions to Carolyn Greenlaw 815-978-0723, csgreen52@aol.com

A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR OF THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT, ANDY NEWGREN

One of my great joys as a kid was creating summer mix tapes. The source material could be difficult to locate, obtain, record and assemble. Where was Spotify and Apple Music when I really needed it?! I would record from various sources - records, tapes, and CDs. My favorite source, however, was recording directly from the radio. This required a few things. First a blank tape had to be ready to go and placed in the tape recorder. Second, you had to be close enough to hit record when the song aired, especially if you did not have a remote. The process demanded attention, expectation, and quick action. And there were moments when I perfectly timed my leap across the bed hitting record at the optimal moment to perfectly capture the song and a tinge of joy would surface at my impeccable timing and relief that finally I had the long hunted for song. Of course it was also in these moments that a brash, obnoxious DJ would ruin it all by transitioning to the next song too quickly or interrupting the final chorus, bridge, or ending, so I would have to repeat the process all over again. Oh the first world problems of youth in the late 80’s and early 90’s.

I still attempt to create seasonal playlists and am thankful it no longer requires the same degree of effort or time. A few selections from this year include Lukas Wilson’s “Turn Off the News (Build a Garden),” Lana Del Rey’s cover of “Doing Time,” and a few tracks from Bruce Springsteen’s Western Stars. Another song that keeps getting played in my house is “Do u Need Love?” by Francis and the Lights. The lyrics don’t suggest the singer is the only provider of love and as the song progresses the question shifts to asking do we need love? The answer needs not be spoken. Francis also confesses, “I’m afraid to be real,” and probes his listener, “I know you are afraid, too.” The link between fear and love is well documented as love is never logical, reached by consensus following a risk assessment plan, or fall neatly into one’s plans and aspirations.

If you were assembling a playlist around love, what songs would make the cut? If you moved beyond music what people exemplify it, what actions embody it, what challenges surface? Putting together this type of seasonal playlist would allow us to note the powerful ways God’s love is at work in our lives and communities and foment courage to not be overcome with fear for what is possible. If you are really brave, you will share that playlist with others to encourage them on their journey. I have already begun assembling mine; I hope you will, too.