

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

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



THE TOWER

Your monthly update on the church and its members

JANUARY 2015

A NOTE FROM THE MODERATOR

by Bob Langford

As I write this note in early December, I assume when you receive the Tower we will be at the beginning of Pastor Rebecca's maternity leave. I do have a need for control in my life, but predicting the birth of a child is not in my skill set. When I was a young boy, my mother dreamed of her son being a minister - Mom, this is the best I can do!

Pastor Rebecca and I have met individually with several of the staff finalizing the plans for the leave period and I feel we have done everything possible to guarantee a stable and productive January and early February. The schedule for visiting ministers has been completed and contains many of the congregation favorites. Julie Eklund will coordinate communication with the visiting preachers to ensure we deliver quality ministerial support during Pastor Rebecca's absence.

I will be in the church office from 9-11 Monday through Thursday to provide support to the staff (sharpening pencils, folding bulletins, making coffee, etc.) I have great confidence in the staff to provide quality service and I ask the congregation to let the staff do their job with minimal interference. I will be the temporary supervisor for the staff and if you have issues I would encourage you to contact me. I would encourage us all to enjoy this short period of maternity leave and anticipate with joy the new addition to our congregation.



JANUARY PREACHING SCHEDULE

While Reverend Rebecca is on maternity leave, we have a great line-up of preachers.

January 3 : **John Rickard**

January 24 : **Kathy Lawes**

January 10 : **Mark Hunter**

January 31 : **Gary Stillwell**

January 17 : **Norm Shirk**

Moderator: Robert Langford
 rrlang44@yahoo.com

Senior Pastor:
 Rev. Rebecca White Newgren
 rebecca@secondfirst.org

Director of Member Care & Neighborhood Connections:
 Becky Erbe
 becky@secondfirst.org

Student Pastor: Julie Eklund
 julie eklund@secondfirst.org

Director of Music: Paul Laprade
 paul@secondfirst.org

Organist: Valerie Blair
 valerie@secondfirst.org

Director of Bells: James Lowell Fry
 james@secondfirst.org

Director, Peanut Bells: Sarah Hallberg
 sarah@secondfirst.org

Director, Alegria: Julie Cook Ramirez
 julie@secondfirst.org

Director, The Carillons: Joyce Zartman
 joycezartman@att.net

Bookkeeper/Business Manager:
 Nancy Yoeckel
 nancy@secondfirst.org

Office Manager: Debbie Wise
 debbie@secondfirst.org

Building Manager: Kurt Riplinger
 kurt@secondfirst.org

Sunday Building Host: Jeff Byrne
 jbyrne6132@yahoo.com

Childcare & Thrift Store Coordinator:
 Stephanie Cooper

Communication Coordinator:
 Erin Sturm
 erin@secondfirst.org

Director of Theological Engagement:
 Andy Newgren
 andy.newgren@secondfirst.org

END OF THE YEAR MISSION GIVING

We have some exciting financial news. Because the building did not hiccup and need a \$50,000 dollar band-aid, as one this size and age can, and because we were under budget and your giving has been so faithful, at its December meeting the Governing Council was given the opportunity to figure out how to be good stewards of some of our funds. Some we will use prudently for a rainy day fund, but thanks to a proposal from the Mission Ministry Team and the unanimous support of the Trustees, we are going to act out in faith at the end of this year and bless a few organizations who are doing Jesus' work on our behalf in our city and beyond. The mission team put in the first \$11,000 and they asked the Governing Council for another \$20,000. In a time when our closest mission partners are struggling because of the state of our state, we will be giving \$5k to each: Carpenter's Place, CROP/Church World Services, Shelter Care, Jubilee, Remedies, and Jeremiah Development. All Fall many of us listened carefully during our Who Is My Neighbor Series, and we heard the need of these organizations. For example, Remedies may be able to keep open a couple more beds for women suffering from abuse. We are in a position to bless our neighbors and we pray that God uses this money to further God's work. Because you, Church, have been faithful to pool our resources together, we can deepen our partnerships and commitments to these organizations, who are doing Jesus' work in our world.

VOLUNTEER & DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Caring Ministries: Keeping in Touch

Are you someone who likes to stay in touch with friends and family? Do you enjoy picking up the phone and calling, swinging by for a quick visit, or dropping a 'thinking of you' note in the mail? As part of our ministry of caring for each other, I'd like to have a list of members who would enjoy keeping in touch with other church members. Let me know if you're interested in exploring this outreach and we can work out the details of who and what and how often. Contact: Marge Maynard 815-980-5304 or mtm.home@me.com

Magazine Donations Requested

Magazine donations are requested for the Rockford jail library. We are specifically asking for Time, Reader's Digest, National Geographic and Sports Illustrated. If you have other titles to donate, please do so as they will be used elsewhere. A donation basket will be available in the back of the sanctuary. Contact: Claude Vernam cap-nana@juno.com

Winter Gear Donations

As the weather gets colder, the Thrift Shop welcomes your winter clothing donations. We are in need of women's, men's, and children's winter clothing and boots as well as pots and pans, Christmas items and jewelry. Contact: Jean Reese 815-968-4544

Apples For Education Program

We provide apples to Haskell School for children who arrive late to school or have not had breakfast. You can help with picking up the apples at the 320 Store or donating a few dollars to the special "Apples for Education Fund". Contact Roger Greenlaw at rgreen97@aol.com or 815-397-4162.

JANUARY EVENTS

Annual Budget Meeting 1/31/16

Please plan to stay after worship on Sunday, January 31, 2016 for the Annual Budget Meeting. Budget packets will be available the prior Sunday.

Snow Camp 2016

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Our annual Snow Camp retreat weekend is coming January 8-10 for those in grades 5-12. We will leave as close to 5pm as we can Friday January 8. We will return between 12:30-1:30 pm on Sunday January 10. It is a great weekend of sledding, horse-back riding, rock climbing, playing broomball, and meeting together with friends. Contact Becky Erbe if your student is interested in attending. Cost is \$100.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2016 Prime Time Movie Schedule

The New Year will bring a new season of film seminars. We will begin on January 13 and 20 with the Walt Disney remake of the classic "Cinderella." Based on the familiar fairy tale, Cinderella is a live-action romantic fantasy film that draws heavily on the 1950 animated version. It stars Lilly James (Lady Rose on Downton Abby) as Cinderella and Richard Madden as her Prince Charming. The film is appropriate for all ages (rated PG) although younger children may prefer the original animated version.

The season will continue with "Waitress" (Feb 17 & 24), and "Billy Elliot" (March 9 & 16). The latter is the stage version of the musical that has been playing continuously in London's East End since it first premiered in 2005. Two additional films will be announced at a later date.

ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES : WINTER 2016 SCHEDULE

Your Adult Education Committee is planning classes for the winter session which runs from January through April.

Wednesday Night Classes schedule:

Supper at 5:45 pm, class at 6:30 pm

January 13 - Feb 3 : Four week series

Feb. 10 : Ash Wednesday

Feb. 16 - March 23 : Lenten series

March 30 - April 20 : Four week series

Our Wednesday night classes are focusing on faith in action. We're looking at the Adult Ed Surveys you filled out in December for guidance in choosing the topics for our upcoming four week series. One topic we have planned is our response to Transform Rockford.

Sunday Morning Koffee Klass schedule:

Class at 9 am, Heritage Room

Jan. 3 : Open Mic conversation session

Jan. 10 - Jan. 31 : Four week DVD series TBA

Feb. 7 : Open Mic conversation session

Feb. 14 - March 20 : Lenten Series Bible Study exploring The Questions of Jesus

Apr. 3 - 27 : Four week series

Your great expectations for Adult Education this winter have been anticipated and we look forward to your participation!

Prayer Requests

Continued prayers for:

Claire Sandow, Karolyn Diehl Nichols, Caren Canfield, Delores Bartizal, Philip & Shirley Davidson, Arlene Snap, Ann Raup, Linda Burright, and Julie Cook Ramirez.

We offer prayers, sympathy, and support for friends and family of Hattie Morris.

We offer prayers, sympathy, and support for friends and family of Richard Patterson.

We offer prayers, sympathy, and support for friends and family of Joanne Strand.

And we pray for all those at home and in long-term care facilities, who are not able to be in worship regularly, but who remain part of our family of faith:

Nancy Bert, Linda Burright, Sally Cooper, Jan Elliott, Elsie Kayser, Marge Kildow, Dusty Lawton, Ruthann Lenard, Beverly Lindsey, Riley Martin, Russell Morgan, Janice Patterson, Ann Raup, John Showers, Marilyn Thayer, Ruth Todd, Ward Wallace, and Willene Ziebell.

JANUARY CALENDAR

Friday, January 1 New Years Day Office Closed	Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour	11:15 AM – Music Ministry 11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
Saturday, January 2 No Bridge Clinic	11:15 AM – Christian Ed Ministry	
Sunday, January 3 Communion 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour 11:15 AM - Music Ministry 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop	11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop 1:00-2:00 PM – Return from Snow Camp	Monday, January 18 9:00 AM – Lydia Urban Academy Mon-Thurs using gym 6:00 PM - Basketball
Monday, January 4, 9:00 AM – Lydia Urban Academy Mon-Thurs using gym 5:30 PM – Jeremiah Dev NOC 6:00 PM - Basketball	Monday, January 11 9:00 AM – Lydia Urban Academy Mon-Thurs using gym 5:30 PM – Deacons 6:00 PM - Basketball	Monday, January 18 9:00 AM – Lydia Urban Academy Mon-Thurs using gym 6:00 PM - Basketball
Tuesday, January 5 7:00 AM – Men 's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 6:00 PM – DVT	Tuesday, January 12 8:00 AM – Men's Fellowship 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 6:00 PM – DVT	Tuesday, January 19 7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 5:30 PM – Mission Ministry
Wednesday, January 6 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting	Wednesday, January 13 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:00 PM - Trustees 5:15 PM – Prime Time and Bells 5:45 PM – Dinner for all 6:30 PM –Movie, Adult Ed, and kids activities, Angelus Ringers	Wednesday, January 20 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 4:30 PM – Membership Ministry 5:15 PM – Prime Time and Bells 5:45 PM – Dinner for all 6:30 PM –Movie, Adult Ed, and kids activities, Angelus Ringers 7:00 PM – Martin Ringers
Thursday, January 7 9:30 AM – Deaconesses 9:30 AM – The Carillons 7:00 PM - Choir	Thursday, January 14 9:30 AM – The Carillons 5:30 PM – Jeremiah Dev. Board 6:00 PM – Basketball 6:00 PM – Belcanto Ringers 7:00 PM – Choir	Thursday, January 21 9:30 AM – The Carillons 6:00 PM – Basketball 7:00 PM - Choir
Friday, January 8 9:30 AM – Alegria 1:00 PM – Horizons Bible Study 5:00 PM – Leave for Snow Camp	Friday, January 15 9:30 AM - Alegria	Friday, January 22 9:30 AM – Alegria
Saturday, January 9 Snow Camp 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic 10:30 AM – Soup Kitchen	Saturday, January 16 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic	Saturday, January 23 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic 3:00 PM – Christmas Vibrations
Sunday, January 10 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 10:00 AM – Worship	Sunday, January 17 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 10:00 AM – Worship Service	Sunday, January 24 9:00 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, January 25
9:00 AM – Lydia Urban Academy Mon-Thurs using gym
6:00 PM - Basketball

Tuesday January 26
7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop

Wednesday, January 27
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:15 PM – Prime Time and Bells
5:45 PM – Dinner for all-Baked Potato Bar
6:30 PM - Adult Ed, and kids activities, Angelus Ringers
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, January 28
9:30 AM – The Carillons
5:30 PM – Governing Council
6:00 PM – Basketball
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, January 29
9:30 AM - Alegria

Saturday, January 30
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, January 31
Budget Meeting
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Budget Meeting
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Every Sunday

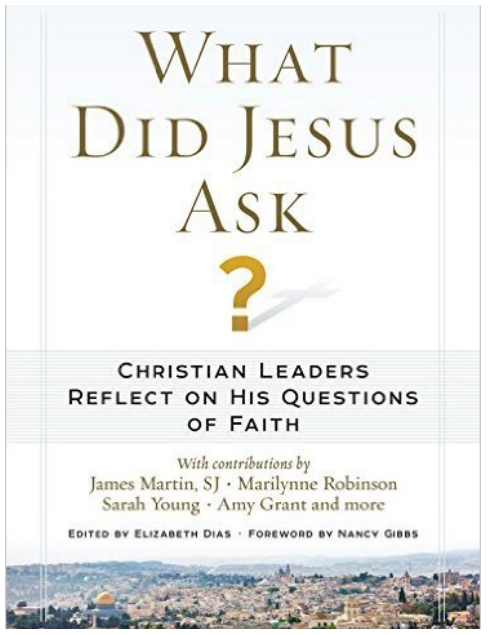
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

LENT AT SECOND FIRST CHURCH: THE QUESTIONS OF JESUS

Lent is a time of introspection; a time to look within, wrestle with our faith, and prepare once again for the death and resurrection of Jesus in our lives. Often we focus on what Jesus did or what he taught.

This Lent we will focus on the questions Jesus asked...there were many! Utilizing the new book What Did Jesus Ask?: Christian Leaders Reflect On His Questions of Faith, we will follow Jesus by asking what he asked and listening for the answers. Some challenging, some comforting, let us prepare our hearts for the journey of Lent open to the questions of faith.

- Ash Wednesday Service, February 10, 6:30 p.m. Sanctuary
- Sunday Worship beginning February 14
- Education Opportunities Wednesday nights and Sunday Koffee Klass
- Palm Sunday Celebration with waving of palms, March 20
- Maundy Thursday Worship, March 24, 6:30 p.m. Sanctuary
- Easter Sunday Celebration, March 27, 10:00 a.m. Sanctuary



If you would like to purchase the book, please check out your local bookstore or search online.

HASKELL ACADEMY BOOT DONATION

by Holly Beeman

What feels better than a pair of warm, awesome looking boots on a winter day? How about more than 300 pairs of warm, awesome looking boots on a winter day!

That's what you will see if you drive by Haskell Academy - Kids with new boots on their way to and from school or playing on the playground.

Our Haskell Boot Project was a huge success for the second year running because you, Second First Church Congregation were so generous with your time and dollars. So many volunteers! Boots were ordered, delivered, transported and sorted. Tags were created, labeled and sorted and then the gathering began. Each boot was tagged, wrapped with ribbon and put into big bags and delivered to Haskell Academy. Next came the best part - the teacher's distributed a pair of boots to each student in their class!

Thank you for volunteering your time, writing all those checks, donating cash and a special thank you for the generous donation from the December Cookie Walk! Second First Church made this special neighborhood project possible.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

Please visit www.secondfirst.org to see our new website! We worked with V2 Marketing of Rockford to create a great new place for visitors to learn about us and church members to stay up-to-date. We're excited to keep the site updated and fresh! If you have any feedback or comments, please email erin@secondfirst.org.

FANTASTIC 23RD COOKIE WALK

by Mary Young

A huge thank you to all of you who helped to make our cookie walk a success. There were 50 bakers who made over 1,600 of the most extraordinarily beautiful cookies as well as Fair Trade goods, hand crafted items, stationery, lighted cubes, ARC jewelry and other lovely items for sale.

Many people enjoyed a delicious chili lunch. We made around \$1800 on cookie sales alone and the Choir guild completely sold out of casseroles. We were proud to pledge money to the Boots for Haskell project.

A special thanks to the core leaders who worked for months planning and the many volunteers who made this a successful event. Also many thanks for the Church Street String Band with vocals.

This is the first time we held this event in the gym and we would appreciate your feedback on this location.



BE THE PEACE YOU PRAY FOR...

by John DeWaters and Lenore Lund

We've heard that expression many times, and never really given it much thought. It seems to be like so many aphorisms that sound good, but don't apply to "real" life.

But we also know, by now, that more bombings, more beheadings, more boots on the ground, more sleeper cell attacks, will only continue to perpetrate the violence and hatred and mistrust and prejudice and fear that permeates our world. Fear and hatred are neither comforted, nor destroyed, nor banished, by bombs and bullets. Fear and hatred are instead created by those violent actions, which then breed more violence, which breeds more fear and hatred, which breeds more violence, which breeds...

...and breeds and breeds. More of the same always creates more of the same. Different results only come from different actions.

Hearing, reading, for over fourteen years now, of horrific violent event after violent event, tragic story after tragic story, of millions of people fleeing or perpetrating murder, terror, destruction, we felt compelled to action. Last Friday we decided to do something different in the hopes of having, at least for ourselves, a different result.

Wanting peace between the Crescent and the Cross, we went to the Rockford Mosque for Friday prayers. For an hour, we, Christians, sat in peace with Muslims. Sometimes moved to tears by the stories of shared grief and uncertainty and fear that they, like us, experience, we were able for an hour to be one people of one God...

...and to be at peace.

We will go back again, because we know that if we truly want peace between Christian and Muslim, between West and Middle East, we have to take action. If we want an end to terror, we have to put aside our fear and prejudice and suspicion, and join hands with all our fellow citizens and servants of God...

and be the peace we pray for.

We invite you to join us.



STEWARDSHIP THANK YOU

The Stewardship Committee invites you to celebrate with us. Your remarkable response to our call for a significant increase in your financial commitment has been overwhelming!

As of last Monday 138 pledges have been received. Sixty percent of you, 79 pledges!, increased your 2016 pledge as we requested. Twenty people or families turned in new pledges. This fulfills the challenge of our Foundation and Endowment funds. Together they will add another \$55,000 to next year's income. We are still counting on and hoping those of you that have not pledged yet do so in order to fill our 2015 budgeting hope and dreams.

Your generosity means that we have sufficient funds to grow our staff. We will be able to strengthen Christian Education, offer community programs that use our gym, and strengthen ministry to our members and outreach to the community.

Please celebrate with us by accepting our Committee's heartfelt thanks for your generosity!