

A NOTE FROM REVEREND REBECCA

Hi Church,

It's 2017! (or soon to be as I write). That's amazing. The start of a new year is always amazing. Our society gives us a chance to do what we do in the church every week. We get a chance to take a deep breath, release all that doesn't serve us well and start again. I hope and pray that you will let go of bad habits and anything that hurts you. But often it is more effective to focus on the positive thing you want to replace it.

In the church every Sunday we are given a chance to confess, be forgiven and start again. We do this not so we can focus on all the things we do that are wrong or hurtful. We do this to offer ourselves to God, be cleansed by the Holy Spirit and start a new day, a new week, knowing that God is with us pushing and prodding us to take the next step toward peace, compassion and justice.

You are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). The old really is gone, so let it go! Happy New Year. May you take up what is new, fresh and blessed by God.

Peace to you and yours in the New Year,

Rebecca



VIBRATIONS AGAINST VIOLENCE

A traditional handbell Christmas concert is a lovely thing to behold, but in light of all the pain, violence, and tumult plaguing the world, our nation, and our city, we decided to make this year's concert more than just a pleasant musical diversion. On December 17th, vocalist Dorothy Paige-Turner and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Board from Pilgrim Baptist Church joined dozens of ringers for Vibrations Against Violence: A Christmas Concert for Peace. Garnering coverage on two local newscasts, this moving, uplifting event raised \$500 for the anti-gun violence night walks program begun through Transform Rockford with the leadership of Rev. Jeffrey Brown. More importantly, it jumpstarted a much-needed conversation about restoring peace in Rockford's most troubled neighborhoods.

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Deacons deacons@secondfirst.org	Membership membership@secondfirst.org	Trustees trustees@secondfirst.org

UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER & DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Saturday, January 28 - January Symposium

SecondFirst will host a January Symposium with the AGO (American Guild of Organists). It will be a day of workshops and educational events – for area organists, choral directors, and handbell directors. Julie Cook-Ramirez will be leading two sessions on bells...Basics and Advanced. AGO Organ Scholarship recipients Josh Ring, Matthew Doran and Andrew Mertzenich will perform at this event.

January 29 - Annual Budget Meeting Announcement

Please plan to stay after worship on Sunday, January 29, 2017 for the Annual Budget Meeting. Budget packets will be available Sunday, January 22. A pasta lunch will be served after the meeting by the Youth.

Announcing 2017 Soup Kitchen Dates

Mark your calendars now with our Saturday lunch schedule at the Jubilee Center. The 2017 dates are Feb 4, Apr 8, June 3, July 22, Oct 14 and Nov 25. Reminders will be posted as each date approaches. If you have any questions at all, Marge Maynard would love to talk with you. Contact her at mtm.home@me.com or 815-980-5304.

NEW CARPET IN THE NURSERY

BEFORE



Ms. Stephanie and Theo playing in the empty nursery preparing for new carpet. This old yellow stuff made it 37 years -- Oh the stories it could tell.

AFTER



What an amazing transformation.... gone is the orange colored carpet in the nursery. We are very blessed new carpeting was installed. Stop in and check out our new squishy play area.

BIG THANK YOU

There are two members (ladies) of the Church that need a Big Thank You. I believe everyone knows who they might be. God gives us so many wonderful things to be thankful for...especially Arlene and Katy. They spend endless hours in the kitchen and are always there for us. They are truly a blessing.

Heartfelt Thanks,
Vera Edmonds



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

by Andy Newgren

This February, read through Ta-Nehisi Coates Between the World and Me. Written as a letter to his teenage son, Coates attempts to unpack the violence they witness against black men and the ongoing struggle against white supremacy. Described as “required reading” by Toni Morrison and “essential, like air and water” by A.O. Scott, we will dig in and wrestle with this momentous book, winner of the 2015 National Book Award. Kick-off event Wednesday February 1st. Look for more details. Contact Andy Newgren with comments or questions.

KOFFEE KLASS REVELATION SERIES

January 8 - February 12

Revelation, the last and most misunderstood book in the Bible, is confusing, alarming, and amazing. Six six six, the mark of the beast, the four horsemen, and the Battle of Armageddon all occur in Revelation and have the power to fascinate and mislead. These powerful images often lead to discussions of the world’s end, but in truth do not. Join us as we unpack the myths of Revelation and determine how this strange book found itself in the Biblical canon.

Led by Everett Schleter and Andy Newgren

LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES: JANUARY & FEBRUARY

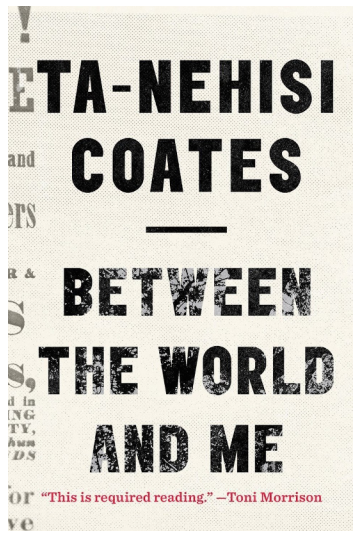
January 11 & 18 - “Cider House Rules” Michael Caine and Tobey Maguire star in this adaptation of John Irving’s novel of the same name. “The Cider House Rules” is a coming of age story of a young boy who grows up in an orphanage and whose youthful idealism is challenged by the experience of living life and the necessity of making difficult and responsible decisions as an adult. Michael Caine won his second Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in his role as the Director/Physician of the orphanage.

February 1- "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”. This is a film adaptation of the original stage production starring Donnie Osmond as Joseph in a role that he had made his own. The story itself is a humorous retelling of the Old Testament Biblical story of Joseph in a musical setting by Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber. It was, in fact, the first of their works ever to be performed publically. It’s a relatively short film so we can screen it in just one evening.

Dinner for all of our films is at 5:45.The film begins at 6:30.

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

On a chilly December morning, four warm souls loaded up their cars and delivered our Advent grocery bags to the Rock River Pantry on Cedar Stree. Any guesses for the total weight of our donation??? 690 pounds! Thank you to the morning helpers and thank YOU for your participation. Thank you to all the kids who decorated our reverse Advent calendar bags.



JANUARY CALENDAR

Sunday, January 1 Communion 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour 11:00 AM – Peanuts Rehearsal 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop	5:00 PM – Basketball NWCC 6:00 PM – Love Rockford Meeting 6:00 PM – Adult Ed Committee 7:00 PM – Faith and Environment Committee
Monday, January 2 9:15 AM – Free Showers 5:00 PM – Basketball NWCC	Tuesday January 10 8:00 AM – Men’s Fellowship 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 6:00 PM – Discernment & Vision
Tuesday, January 3 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 1:00 PM – JD Executive Meeting	Wednesday, January 11 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:00 PM - Trustees 5:30 PM – Prime Time 6:00 PM – Transit: Orange Line Youth Group 7:00 PM – Martin Ringers
Wednesday, January 4 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 12:00 PM – Jeremiah Dev NIC 5:00 PM - Membership No Prime Time No Transit	Thursday, January 12 9:15 AM – Free Showers 9:30 AM – Carillons 5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Bellcanto 7:00 PM - Choir
Thursday, January 5 9:15 AM - Free Showers 9:30 AM - Deaconesses 6:00 PM – Bellcanto 7:00 PM – Choir	Friday, January 13 1:00 PM – Horizons Bible Study
Friday, January 6 Snow Camp	Saturday, January 14 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
Saturday, January 7 Snow Camp 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic	Sunday, January 15 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour 11:15 AM - Governing Council Meeting 11:30 AM – Christian Education Ministry 11:30 AM – Music Ministry 11:30 AM – Fellowship Ministry 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
Sunday, January 8 9:00 AM – Koffee Klass 9:20 AM – Wee Worship 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop Snow campers return	
Monday, January 9 9:15 AM – Free Showers 5:00 PM – Deacons	

Monday, January 16
9:15 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Basketball NWCC

Tuesday, January 17
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer
Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
1:00 PM – Executive
Committee
5:30 PM – Mission Ministry

Wednesday, January 18
10:00 Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Prime Time
6:00 PM – Transit: Orange
Line Youth Group
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, January 19
9:15 AM – Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
6:00 PM - Bellcanto
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, January 20
No Scheduled Events

Saturday, January 21
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, January 22
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
9:15 AM – Memorial
Committee Meeting
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
11:30 AM – Family Fun
Games

Monday, January 23
9:15 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Basketball NWCC

Tuesday January 24
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer
Breakfast
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

Offering Envelopes

The dated Offering Envelopes Boxes for 2017 are available by the nametags. Please note they are not numbered this year.

Wednesday, January 25
10:00 Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Prime Time
6:00 PM – Transit: Orange
Line Youth Group
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, January 26
9:15 AM – Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
5:30 PM – Governing Council
6:00 PM - Bellcanto
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, January 27
No Scheduled Events

Saturday, January 28
8:00 AM – American Guild of
Organists Meeting
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, January 29
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Budget Meeting
11:30 AM – Pasta Lunch in
the Dining Room
11:30 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, January 30
9:15 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Basketball NWCC

Tuesday, January 31
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer
Breakfast
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

GIFTS IN JANUARY: MUSIC AT SECONDFIRST

by Paul Laprade

The celebration of Christmas is a musical highlight of our church, with a reason for brass, bells, strings, and voices to join together to celebrate the birth of our Lord. For me, the anticipation begins quite early, often in July, when I begin the first round of choosing the finest pieces I can find to fit our services for the season. It is at that time that the final selection of music and musicians begins to solidify, and when I begin to sense the musical excitement that will begin months later in our Advent and Christmas services.

Nonetheless, January brings its own excitement musically. Valerie Blair begins the New Year with her skillful piano and organ playing (January 1st). The SecondFirst Jazz Band returns on Epiphany (January 8th), bringing a new twist to familiar Christmas tunes. Choral music returns on the 15th with the Woodwork Choir—and every congregant is welcome to join it! Saxophonist Ken Stein accompanies the Sanctuary Choir on January 22nd, featuring a toe tapping rendition of the spiritual “Jesus Calls Us” and a new and touching work called “Love Never Ends” graces our sanctuary. Finally, the Rock Valley Chamber Singers and the Sanctuary Choir will join forces on the final Sunday of the month to raise the roof in joyful sound. Bells return in February, and, as always, I hope you will find that our music connects you to the Word, fills you with joy, and enhances our time together.



STEWARDSHIP RESULTS

To all who have promised our congregation your financial support for 2017, thank you very much. In the spirit of the Good Samaritan you have again responded to Jesus’ call to “Go and Do the Same.” We are pleased to report that the congregation has responded generously. How blessed is SecondFirst Church to have a community of faith that believes in what God is doing here, in this place. To any who have yet to promise your support please join those who have.Pledge cards are available by calling the church office, 815-963-8431.

MY COMMUNION STORY

by Sarah Hallberg

I was sitting with all of the little ones this past Sunday during communion before I took them up for Peanuts rehearsal. When Pastor Rebecca broke the bread the awe could be seen in their faces, little Josanny even gasped. When the bread was passed out, I explained how to hold it in their hands and not smash it, but to hold in very gently, when we were given the ok to take the bread we all did together. They thought the bread was very good. Then came the Juice, I told them that I usually say a prayer before I drink thanking God. Before Josanny drank his juice, I could hear him whisper his prayer, he prayed Dear God, thank you for this juice.

I wasn’t very keen on offering communion to our children thinking that they needed to be confirmed as I had been. To understand what communion means.

I think that in some ways they do understand, you could see it. Their awe when the bread was broken, to see them hold the bread as if it were truly something special, and to give thanks to God before drinking.

SNOW CAMP

by Courtney Jonsson

My first week as the Youth Director at Second First Church, I attended a staff meeting on Wednesday and was put on the bus to Snow Camp on Friday. “Good Luck,” was the comment I heard many times before boarding the bus. If I'm honest, I was pretty nervous, but the kids seemed to warm up to me right away. During that weekend we laughed, played, and even got to have some serious conversations. Never did I expect to build such strong relationships with all of the kids so quickly, but Snow Camp was the key in making that happen.

Not only will we have some Snow Camp veterans attending camp with us, but we also opened up registration for some first timers. This year, SecondFirst Church will be joined by Jerusalem Baptist Church. Delicia Harris, the youth leader at Jerusalem, will be bringing six of her teenagers along. We are excited to have them join us, and pray it becomes part of their tradition.

As we embark on this journey another year, I would like to ask you to pray for us and with us. Pray for fun, laughter, and joy. Pray that we make connections with those coming with us for the first time. Pray that we have safe travel to and from our destination. Please pray for hearts to be opened to the goodness that God has in store for all attending. Thank you so much in advance for your prayers and well wishes. I cannot wait to share the stories from this amazing weekend with you.



GOVERNING COUNCIL UPDATES

by Carolyn Greenlaw

For your information, I have included a few notes from our last two Governing Council Meetings. From October: The Mexican Consulate will be meeting at our church in January 2017. Becky Erbe is working toward her ministry degree through UCC Berkeley Seminary with graduation March 2017. Our after school program has been moved back to NW Community Center. Pastor Rebecca and Andy Newgren are leading six sessions on white privilege. Pop-up dinner in our parking lot was very successful and included neighbors, staff, business owners and moderators. Pastor Tito Cevallos has been hired for a part-time staff position while developing a Shalom ministry outreach plan. He will participate more often in worship. There were 9 graduates of Literacy Council training from our church. Strategic Planning with Pam Reidenbach from NICNE had first session. A new policy for costs of Annual and Regional Meetings of UCC and PCUSA has been adopted and is available for review in office.

In November: Governing Council decided to make the spelling of the name of our church ‘SecondFirst’ with no space in between. Nominating Committee is asked to suggest people who could assist in developing a Volunteer Coordinator position. Bill Hoff reported that the Public Library is interested in renting 45 parking spaces from SecondFirst Church.

PRAYER REQUESTS

We offer prayers, sympathy, and support for friends and family of F. Russell Morgan, who passed away on December 7. The funeral service was held on December 10, in the Sanctuary.

Continue prayers for Mary Lea Freedlund, Tito Cevallos, Wes Hegge’s father, Phil Turner, and Philip & Shirley Davidson.

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: Thomas Hill (Bob Saunders uncle), Jim & Nora Jean Rollins, Miriam Richardson, Norma & Wayne Nicholson, Nancy Bert, Jan Elliott, Elsie Kayser, Marge Kildow, Ruthann Lenard, Beverly Lindsey, John Showers, Marilyn Thayer, Ruth Todd, Ward Wallace, and Willene Ziebell.

TRANSFORM ROCKFORD'S SHARED VALUES

by Sally Hoff

The Discernment and Vision Team seeks your input on the shared values put forth by Transform Rockford "as the foundation for a civil and cultivating environment." SecondFirst Church has been asked to affirm these values as many other churches have done, including our sister Jeremiah Development congregations. Please read and consider these value statements; contact Sally Hoff (815-247-8000, sallykhoff@gmail.com) or Roger Greenlaw (815-397-4162, rgreen97@aol.com) with your comments.

- **Inclusion:** Cultivate and support an environment that fully engages our community's differences and diversity to ensure that individuals and organizations are heard, valued and supported.
- **Caring:** Show concern for the welfare of each person and foster a community culture that thinks and acts as one interactive and interdependent region.
- **Respect:** Embrace the knowledge and experiences of others by being attentive, listening well, and celebrate diversity as a strength and source of shared learning.
- **Transparency:** Foster an open process for maximum participant input and access to all information to enhance understanding and community ownership.
- **Trustworthiness:** Strive for integrity and reliable communication. Become committed to the highest levels of honesty and truthfulness.
- **Unity:** Place the greater good of all parts of our region and its transformation ahead of self or organizational interests.
- **Ideation:** Balance our brainstorming and decision-making process with all points of view and measurable information.
- **Responsibility:** Pursue excellence and accountability of self and others by not shifting blame or taking improper credit. Participate to the fullest of our ability. Interconnectedness: Won't compromise any jurisdiction or organization's identity or decision authority, but rather look to partner and integrate shared values, goals and philosophies.

SAVE THE DATE: LOVE ROCKFORD

Jeremiah Development will be hosting Love Rockford on April 29 from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. The event will be four hours of services and fun for the underserved throughout Rockford. Attendees can take part in free services that include:

Lunch, Counseling and Housing, Medical and Dental, Book Shop, Clothing, Haircuts, and Children's activities. If you would like to volunteer, offer services, or just learn more please email Holly Beeman at hbeeman@martinauto.com



JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

by Michelle Ryan



We are wrapping another year. It is hard to believe that 2016 is coming to an end. Jeremiah kept busy this year with Loaded Brush Luminaries, Party in the Park, the garden, and our housing rehabilitation partnerships with Rockford Urban Ministries and the City of Rockford. Each year, we have been able to count on all of you here at SecondFirst to help make our programs successful. You have helped to support us, volunteered with us, and shown enthusiasm for our endeavors. Thank you! We look forward to seeing you in 2017.