



A WORD FROM REVEREND REBECCA

Church,

Lent is hard. Turning toward God with repentant hearts. Being more diligent about fasting and prayer. Awaiting the death of Jesus. I am glad that Easter is almost here.

Each week during Lent we have worshipped and studied on Wednesday nights focusing on Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication*. That is not easy. Getting down to the basics of how we interact with our friends, family and neighbors takes courage. Last week's chapter said this:

"When people hear anything that sounds like criticism, they tend to invest their energy in self-defense or counterattack. If we wish for a compassionate response from others, it is self-defeating to express our needs by interpreting or diagnosing their behavior. Instead, the more directly we can connect our feelings to our needs, the easier it is for others to respond to us compassionately" (*Nonviolent Communication*, 3rd Edition, pg 53)

It takes time and intention to figure out when we are communicating with compassion and when we are doing harm to one another.

Each Thursday we have spent thirty minutes doing Meditation and Mindfulness with therapist and SecondFirst member Sandy Williams. Scripture says, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46). Some of us have a harder time than others (me!) sitting still, and we need these tools and intentional time to just be in the presence of God. (Sandy is gracious to keep her language open to welcome folks from many or no religious tradition. I know I sit in the presence of God).

Lent is hard work. Gratefully, there is abundant grace for the seasons of life when Lent passes us by or when we lose our intentions part way through. Thanks be to God that Lent readies us to experience the saving life of the resurrected Christ. I am ready to celebrate. I hope you will invite your friends and family and join together for Easter!

Peace and perseverance be with you,
Rebecca



Iain Devine of Anderson Gardens trimmed the blue spruce on the east side of the church. A big thank you to Zan Picchioni for making this happen!



Family Bowling took place on Sunday, February 26th. What a fun time! There were gutter balls, strikes, and an a"spare"agus or two, world record highs broken, and lots of laughs!



Nathaniel and his team defend their flag during the Transit Nerf War Night on March 18th.

WALK TOGETHER TO THE CROSS

You can easily skip from the celebration of Palm Sunday to the exaltation of Easter, but try not to!

Three ways we can walk together to the cross:

1) During Holy Week, read Jesus' story in the gospel of Luke

- ▶ Monday Luke 19:41 - 20:19
- ▶ Tuesday Luke 20:19-47
- ▶ Wednesday Luke chapter 21
- ▶ Thursday Luke 22:1-65
- ▶ Friday Luke 22:66 through the end chapter 23
- ▶ Saturday: Challenge yourself to sit in silence for 30 minutes or more (unless you have small kids or a needy cat, then less will do)

2) Maundy Thursday Worship, April 13, 6:30 Sanctuary

3) Good Friday Worship, April 14, noon, Sanctuary



EASTER WORSHIP APRIL 16, 10 AM

Come celebrate the risen Christ and the life he gives us. With brass, strings and the SecondFirst Sanctuary Choir, let the joy abound and the Alleluias ring out.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER & DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Annual Reports Are Due In The Office By Sunday, April 2

Soup Kitchen - April 8

Jean Herro will be coordinating her first Soup Kitchen on Saturday, April 8. Let's make her inaugural experience a great one! If you can work anytime from 10 am to 1 pm, Jean would love to have you as part of the team. First-timers and seasoned volunteers are welcome. Contact: Jean Herro 815-399-7213

Palm Sunday Potluck - April 9

Everyone is invited to the Palm Sunday Potluck held after church on Sunday, April 9. There will be great food and conversation! Ham, beverages, and place settings will be provided. Please bring a dish to share that can be kept cool or warm in the kitchen during the Worship Service. We encourage everyone to enter the dining room together to sit at the tables. There will be two tables reserved only for people in walkers or wheelchairs.



Sandy Williams leading Meditations and Mindfulness, Thursdays 12:15 during Lent

Annual Program Meeting – May 7

Please stay for the annual program meeting immediately following Worship on Sunday, May 7 then join us for a luncheon in the dining room. A free will offering will be taken to benefit the Youth Ministry.

Mac & Cheese Cook-off - May 7

Transit Youth Ministry will be hosting a Mac and Cheese Cook-off immediately following the Annual Meeting on May 7th. Each chef will be asked to make a specialty dish of mac and cheese. Each chef is required to fill one 14"x10" disposable aluminum pan, provided by the church. Guests will place donations in the bucket of their favorite recipe. Winners will be announced at the end of the event. All proceeds will benefit Transit Youth Ministry. To register as a chef please see Courtney Jonsson or email courtney.jonsson@secondfirst.org.

Thrift Shop Volunteers

We are seeking volunteers to help with the Thrift Shop. It is open on Tuesdays, from 9:00 to 1:00 pm. The shop is open through May 23. Contact: Lois Boyd 815-282-5256

Garden Volunteers

We welcome new volunteers who love to garden and those that just love to meet new people. There will be someone with gardening experience on-site to help new gardeners, and lots of opportunities to get to know others. You are welcome to join us on Saturday, April 8 at 9 am.

Easter Sunday Flowers

Tulips in yellow, pink or purple cost \$12.50. White double stemmed Easter Lilies cost \$16.50, and Azaleas in deep pink cost \$16.00. Orders are due by Thursday, April 6. Contact Debbie Wise at 815-963-8431.

GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

February 23 Meeting

Treasurer: Congregant giving is under budget, but higher than last year.

Holly Hegge, Membership Chair: Reported on the interior and exterior signage project. Images of outdoor signs for the south and west sides of the building were shown.

Becky Erbe: There is increased neighborhood traffic for Wednesday nights, use of showers, receiving travel help, and home visits.

Pastor Rebecca: The pop-up dinner was a success. Discussions are continuing on utilization of the gym and keeping our church both welcoming and safe. Sandy Williams will lead mindfulness meditation on Thursdays at 12:15 in the Sanctuary. Lenten Wednesday nights will include a discussion of the Marshall Rosenberg book on non-violent communication.

After discussion, it was moved, seconded, and passed to host the Unity in Diversity community meeting on March 19 in the Sanctuary. Detailed minutes are available in the church office.

LOOKING BACK - ONE BOOK ONE CHURCH

by Andy Newgren

In recognition of Black History Month, we collectively read Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me*, his moving and personal account written to his teenage son. This challenging work prompted engagement, spurred difficult and substantive conversations, and forced critical reflection, especially for those of us who, as Coates writes, "believe themselves to be white." The legacy of white supremacy and the American tradition "to destroy the black body" force us to examine not only personal perceptions of race but face the overwhelming task of destructing the false concept of race and summon the determination to "perform (our) whiteness differently." Cornel West writes, "you must let suffering speak if you want to hear the truth." Reading this book was an attempt to do just that.

Lingering questions remain for us to answer, the most difficult of which is, "what will you do to participate in the struggle for liberation?" This question demands our attention and respect to not answer too quickly. Certainly there is much work to do, but work this congregation seems to be committed to. Many folks ask what can I do in the meantime? Prominent scholar and Baptist preacher Michael Eric Dyson has a few ideas. As tax season is upon us, think of establishing an IRA - Individual Reparations Account. Donate to the United Negro College Fund. Pay the person of color who cuts your grass more than (possibly double?) market rate. Dyson states you can engage in change or engage in convenience. One is costly, one embodies discipleship, one is where we can expect to see our Lord.

The work ahead is daunting, challenging, and frightening. When facing such obstacles, remember the wisdom of Nelson Mandela who said, "It always seems impossible...until it's done."

PRAYER REQUESTS

Continue prayers for Lola Church, Ellwood & Helen Burkland, Ed Conklin, Scott Anderson, Mary Lea Freedlund, 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 Saunder's uncle), Jim & Nora Jean Rollins, Miriam Richardson, Norma & Wayne Nicholson, Nancy Bert, Jan Elliott, Elsie Kayser, Marge Kildow, Ruthann Lenard, Beverly Lindsey, Marilyn Thayer, Ruth Todd, Ward Wallace, and Willene Ziebell.

LOVE ROCKFORD

Love Rockford is almost here! April 29 is the big day, and there are still plenty of opportunities to volunteer.

- **VOLUNTEER:** Volunteers to serve on a planning committee, volunteers to help on April 29
- **DONATE GOODS:** Gently used clothing, books, toilet paper (single or double rolls), functional bicycles
- **PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** Our budget is \$7000, and we are over halfway there. Personal donations and business sponsorships are accepted on our website. Also, checks may be sent to Jeremiah Development, 318 N. Church Street, 61101, inserting LOVE ROCKFORD in the memo line.



To volunteer for Love Rockford please contact Michelle at 815-988-2639 or michelle@jeremiahdevelopment.org

APRIL CALENDAR

Saturday, April 1, 2017

10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic
11:00 AM – Basketball
Booker Washington

Sunday, April 2, 2017

Communion
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
9:45 AM – Peanuts Prep
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 - All Teachers Meeting
11:30 AM – Transit Blue Line Youth Group
6:00 PM - Basketball NW

Monday, April 3, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers
5:00 PM – Deacons
5:30 PM – Jeremiah NOC

Tuesday April 4, 2017

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Presbytery Westminster Rockford
1:00 PM – JD Executive Meeting
7:00 PM - Faith & Environment Committee

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
12:00 PM – Jeremiah NIC
5:00 PM – Membership Ministry
5:30 PM – Angelus Ringers
5:45 PM – Soup Dinner
6:30 PM – Lenten Service
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 6, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
9:30 AM - Deaconesses
12:15 PM – Meditations in Sanctuary
5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting
5:30 PM - Bellcanto

7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, April 7, 2017

No scheduled activities

Saturday, April 8, 2017

9:00 AM - JD Garden Cleanup
10:00 AM – Soup Kitchen
10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
11:00 AM – Basketball
Booker Washington

Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
No Wee Worship
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Potluck
No Christian Education Ministry
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop
6:00 PM - Basketball NW

Monday, April 10, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers
No Deacons Ministry Team
No Adult Ed Committee
No Faith and Environment Committee

Tuesday April 11, 2017

8:00 AM – Men’s Fellowship
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
6:00 PM - Discernment and Vision

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Angelus Ringers
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 13, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
6:30 PM – Maundy Thursday Service
7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, April 14, 2017

12:00 PM - Good Friday Service
No Horizons Bible Study

Saturday, April 15, 2017

No Bridge Clinic
11:00 AM – Basketball
Booker Washington

Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
No Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
No Music Ministry Team
No Fellowship Ministry Team
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, April 17, 2017

Office Closed
5:00 PM – RVC rehearsal

Tuesday April 18, 2017

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
No Executive Committee
5:30 PM - Mission Ministry Team

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

12:00 PM – Plus Size Closet
5:30 PM – Prime Time
5:30 PM – Angelus Ringers
6:00 PM – Transit :Orange Line Youth group
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 20, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
12:00 PM – Gordon Circle
5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting
5:30 PM – Bellcanto
6:15 PM – ARC rec night
7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, April 21, 2017

No scheduled activities

Saturday, April 22, 2017

10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic
11:00 AM – Basketball
Booker Washington

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Guest Preacher Abby Mohaupt
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
11:30 AM – Fair For All Shop

3:00 PM – Rock Valley Concert

Monday, April 24, 2017

9:30 AM – Free Showers

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop
1:00 PM - Executive Committee

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Prime Time
5:30 PM – Angelus Ringers
6:00 PM – Transit :Orange Line Youth group
7:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 27, 2017

9:30 AM - Free Showers
9:30 AM – Carillons
5:30 PM – Governing Council
6:00 PM – Bellcanto
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, April 28, 2017

No scheduled activities

Saturday, April 29, 2017

8:00 AM – Prairie Assn. Meeting Hinckley
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic
10:00 AM – Love Rockford Event

Sunday, April 30, 2017

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
11:30 AM – Fair For All Shop
3:00 PM – Ring in Spring Concert

RING IN SPRING APRIL 30

The annual Ring in Spring handbell concert will be held on April 30th at 3 pm at SecondFirst. There will be five handbell ensembles performing, ranging from preschoolers to senior citizens. We will also be presenting a “Compassionate Teacher” award to an educator from Haskell Academy. It will be a wonderful way to celebrate the beginning of spring! Please attend and bring your friends.

A LITTLE BIT FROM BECKY E

We have a new Neighborhood Resource Room! The old outdated computers have been removed from the small classroom by the gym office. In the resource room, there are towels, washcloths, and personal hygiene kits for folks in need of a shower. There is a basket full of hand and foot warmers that I pass out on Wednesday nights to some of our regular neighborhood guests. They are a blessing on cold nights. There is also a basket of warm socks and a basket of feminine hygiene supplies. One side of the room is full of all sizes of diapers.

Thank you to all who have donated travel-size toiletries, hand and foot warmers, socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste and extra towels. Thank you to our diaper ministry partner, Woodside Congregational Church. We are so fortunate to be able to help our neighborhood friends.

DIVERSITY FOCUS

by Carolyn Greenlaw

“Strong Teams are diverse teams. You don’t have to like or understand everyone, ---it’s better if you don’t. A team of “you clones” can’t accomplish anything beyond what you could accomplish alone.” - Anonymous

Diversity has been a recent focus for SecondFirst Church programs. Pastor Rebecca and staff have led us through our study of: “Who is my Neighbor?” Comparing Islam and Christianity, the book study [“Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and our fall Series on Race. We have studied many factors that lead us toward or away from diversity. Denise Young Smith, VP of World Wide Human Resources reminds us: “Diversity is more than any gender, race, age or ethnicity. It is richly representative of all people, back grounds and perspectives. It is the entire human experience.”

What does diversity look like at the work place? Interacting with people from different life experiences leads us to prepare better, anticipate alternative view points and make a stronger effort to reach consensus.

What does diversity look like at church? Do we create a positive attitude towards all people because of our diversity in worship and service? Examples of music, toys, art, food, come to mind. This focus on diversity means that through our conversations at church, we participate in one another’s stories that are different from our own. We are asked to move beyond tolerance towards acceptance and respect as we celebrate all individuals. We are asked to include all of life’s experiences while promoting people to be fully themselves.

I have loved our focus on diversity; it gives us all much to ponder. Scott Williams, author of [Church Diversity: Sunday the Most Segregated Day of the Week](#), states that church diversity is about challenging ourselves to move beyond “what is - to what will be. Diversity in the church will allow us to catch a glimpse of heaven on earth. “Are we moving toward a more inclusive culture by embracing diversity through commitment and action?



SPECIAL MUSIC ABOUND THIS SPRING

by Paul Laprade

Rock Valley College’s Three Choirs Concert – Sunday, April 23, 3:00 pm, SecondFirst Church

Come hear some of Rockford’s best young voices when the choirs of Rock Valley College sing music by Brahms, Burleigh, and Britten, with our own Valerie Kay Blair accompanying them on piano and organ. (\$10/adults; \$5/students and seniors; all proceeds benefit the college’s music scholarship programs)

Ring in Spring – Sunday, April 30, 3:00 pm, SecondFirst Church

A mainstay of the Rockford concert scene for decades, the annual Ring in Spring features all five of our handbell ensembles in a fun-filled concert. If past years are any indication, there may even be a surprise or two! (A free will offering will be collected to benefit a worthy cause—more information to come!)

Choir Major Work & New Setting of the First Presbyterian Sesquicentennial Hymn, SecondFirst Church

We have tentatively scheduled our major work, Bob Chilcott’s “Gloria,” for Sunday, May 21 during worship. This work will be paired with a new choral/brass setting of “We Are Surrounded,” the hymn written for the First Presbyterian Church’s sesquicentennial hymn.

Westminster Concert Bell Choir – Tuesday, May 23, 7:00 pm, SecondFirst Church

Under the direction of Kathleen Ebling Shaw, the Westminster Concert Bell Choir of Westminster Choir College has achieved international acclaim. Its performances are broadcast annually on NPR, and we have the rare opportunity to host them right here in our sanctuary. The ensemble performs on the largest range of handbells, as well as the widest range of choir chimes in the world. (\$15 adults; \$10 seniors/students; children 12 and under, free. Tickets available from the SecondFirst office after March 15.)

FROM THE ORGAN BENCH BY VALERIE BLAIR

I'm going rogue this year for Easter, playing pieces for organ and brass for the prelude and postlude. Yes, it's a break with tradition, but I think it will be exciting. As long as we have the brass here, why not rock out a bit? The Widor Toccata will come on April 23, so we won't have complete withdrawal.

ABOUT THE ROCK RIVER VALLEY PANTRY

by Audrey Williams

In 1973, a Rock Valley College student conceived the idea of collecting and distributing food to needy families in the Rockford community. A Board of Directors was formed and that college student, Stanley Campbell, was appointed the first (volunteer) director. Run by volunteers, RRVP opened in 1974. During the first year, food (supplied mainly by churches) was provided to 1,745 individuals.

Today, RRVP is operated by three full-time and four part-time staff, plus many volunteers. Through its two distribution centers, RRVP provides healthy, nutritionally balanced, emergency food relief to families, individuals, and the elderly.

Grocers, gardeners, kids, service groups, churches, community efforts and donors all help provide food to those living at or below the poverty level. Last year, partnering with local grocers allowed RRVP to rescue 417,821 pounds of perishables and dry goods; monetary support enabled the purchase of 478,967 pounds of needed foods; partnering with the State of Illinois provided 309,098 pounds of commodities; local drives provided 94,272 pounds of food; and gardens provided 26,595 pounds of fresh produce.

Food donations are always welcome, but this year, the Mission Board has decided to have a fund drive for RRVP. Monetary donations allow the pantry to purchase what they need at two to three times less than what would be spent at a retail store.

Come to church on April 2nd to receive your envelope and learn where all this food goes!

EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS



We're Using Earth Friendly Cleaning Products

In celebration of Earth Day on April 22, SecondFirst Church announces we use all natural cleaning supplies at the church! In the fall we switched from harsh toxic cleaning chemicals to products like vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide and essential oils. Not only are these products less expensive, our cleaning staff reports feeling better and breathing freer.

We've Added New Recycling Bins

Did you notice our new recycling bins!?! Now every trash can in the building is paired with a recycling bin. (If we missed one, let us know...this is a big building!) We know that when faced with a choice, people will recycle. Doing what we can to care for God’s creation.

Our Energy Subcommittee Made Positive Changes

An Energy Subcommittee of the Trustees' formed last fall. The subcommittee has already implemented changes such as new LED lighting in Emerson Hall, which will save a lot of electricity and money! Many thanks to Jim Delmore and Kurt Riplinger for making that happen. Currently, the Energy Subcommittee is working on researching renewable energy options, making our building more energy efficient, and looking into our aging air conditioner units. Look for more improvements to come from this committee! Contact Sarah Reinold, chair,



with any questions or ideas.

Preaching April 23 for Earth Day: Rev. Abby Mohaupt



The Rev. Abby Mohaupt is a member of San Francisco Presbytery and a PhD student at Drew University in New Jersey. Her deep love of God's good creation began in her childhood home's backyard in Rockford, and continues in her work as the moderator for Fossil Free PCUSA, a member of the Presbyterian Hunger Programs Advisory Committee, and contributor to Presbyterians for Earth Care. She holds a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from McCormick Theological Seminary.

She is partner to Nathan Fleming, and daughter of Linda and Terry Mohaupt.

Pastor Rebecca and Abby first met while Rebecca was the co-director (with Andy) of the Seminarian Immersion Program of Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia. We are delighted and honored to have Abby preach for Earth Day.

CREATION & CHRISTIANITY: EXAMINING ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Global warming and climate change force us to face new challenges and a literally changing landscape. Beginning April 26th, we will tackle the intersection between faith and the environment bringing in experts on a variety of topics and discuss how, and if, our faith impacts the way we view and live on our earth, the other animals, and how we might spur ourselves into action. Come whether you are anxious about the health of the planet or uncertain you can make a difference.

April 26: Wildness and Conservation: Jerry Paulson, Conservationist and former Director of the Natural Land Institute

May 3: Water: Maggie (Hoff) Hopkins, environmental engineer specializing in water resources

May 10: Food: Sally Hoff & Roger Greenlaw

May 17: Moving Forward: Linda Mohaupt

Contact Andy Newgren at andy.newgren@secondfirst.org for more information.