



## A WORD FROM REVEREND REBECCA

Church,

Have you ever heard of a grassroots strategic plan? Me neither. But I think we have just done it! It will be up for your vote at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, April 29th.

Our Discernment and Vision Team has been hard at work this year pulling a 3-5 year plan out of you. First, we listened to you with a strategic planning facilitator. Then we gathered what we heard into 4 strategies, which we took back to you, the congregation, in two town hall meetings. Then we turned those adapted strategies (broad direction) over to the ministry teams to fill out their goals (and dreams) for the next 3-5 years (remember when organizations could plan for 10 years? Times do change.) Now the plan is receiving it's final alterations and will be ready for our Annual Meeting.

Our ministry teams have some great ideas and I am excited for you to see them. May God use these ideas to fulfill our Easter mission.

Happy Resurrection (in this life) to you!

Rebecca



Jeanne Vargas of the Northwestern Illinois Institute for Mindfulness leads a refreshing meditation on Thursday.



Madeline Archer and Dave Jones doing the gospel reading on March 11

## LET'S RING IN SPRING!

By Julie Cook Ramirez, Director of Handbell Ministries



Spring is in the air and that means our annual handbell concert is right around the corner! All five of our ensembles will be performing and vocalist Vanessa Nieva will be joining the Martin Ringers on their uplifting closing number. We'll be sharing a wide variety of music, including some fun new selections. I don't want to spoil any surprises, so you'll just have to join us on Sunday, May 6 at 3:00 pm. This year's concert will benefit KFACT, so come out to support their important mission, listen to some amazing music, and enjoy the traditional dessert buffet afterwards. See you there!

*KFACT specializes in providing an array of holistic comprehensive services: school based prevention education groups, intervention services, youth development programs, youth advocacy, college and career mentorship, transitional assistance from high school to post-secondary education and ongoing support through E-Mentoring.*





## UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER & DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Last Call for Plastic Caps is April 30

Bring in all those plastic caps you have been collecting for Mayfield UCC's butterfly garden bench! The final day is Monday, April 30, and they will be gathered and delivered after that. Thank you for your help with this project! Contact: Marge Maynard [mtm.home@me.com](mailto:mtm.home@me.com)

### Transit Youth Group Rec Night - April 20

Join us for a Transit Youth Group Rec Night on Friday, April 20 from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm! We will be meeting at Laser Quest at 5:30 pm. Pizza will be served and three games of laser tag will be played. Bring your friends! The cost of this Rec Night is \$5 per student. Spots are limited and will be reserved upon payment. Please Contact: [dyan.lofgren@secondfirst.org](mailto:dyan.lofgren@secondfirst.org) to reserve your spot.

### Annual Program Meeting - April 29

Our annual program meeting will be Sunday, April 29 after the worship service. Annual reports from our ministry teams and committees are due on Wednesday, April 4.

### Opportunity for Giving: Peanut Butter!

May is Peanut Butter Month! How many pounds of PB can we collect for the Food Pantry? 100? 200? 500?! Bring in jars of any size, deposit it into the crate at the back of the sanctuary, and we will let you know each week where we stand. How high can we go? Contact: Marge Maynard [mtm.home@me.com](mailto:mtm.home@me.com).



Serving at the Soup Kitchen

## TRANSIT YOUTH MINISTRY APPETIZER COOK OFF ON APRIL 29

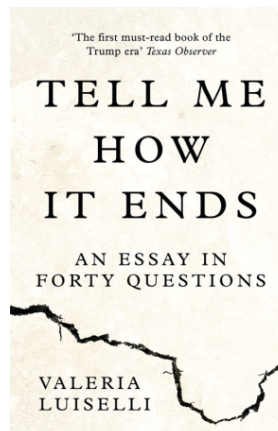
Transit Youth Ministry will be hosting an "Appetizer Cook-off" immediately following the Annual Meeting on April 29. Each chef will be asked to make their special appetizer. Each chef is required to fill one 14"x10" disposable aluminum pan, provided by the church. Guests will place donations in the bucket of their favorite recipe. Winners will be announced in church on May 6. All proceeds will benefit Transit Youth Ministry. To register as a chef Contact: Dyan Lofgren [dyan.lofgren@secondfirst.org](mailto:dyan.lofgren@secondfirst.org).

## TRANSIT SAVE THE DATES

- June 10 - Youth Car Wash
- June 17 - Transit Mission Trip to Kenosha, WI
- June 24 - Youth Sunday
- July 29 - Slip and Slide Kickball



## ADULT EDUCATION CLASS KICK OFF EVENT - WEDNESDAY APRIL 4



Last October the Missions and Adult Education ministry teams organized an engaging presentation on immigration from local immigration attorney Sara Dady. This April the teams are again partnering to host a book discussion on immigration using Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions, which examines young immigrants facing deportation. Discussion groups will gather at various times.

- April 4: Kick-off
- April 11 & 13: Discussion groups
- April 18 & 20: Discussion groups
- April 25: Conclusion/ Wrap-up

Questions? Contact: Marge Maynard [mtm.home@me.com](mailto:mtm.home@me.com) or Andy Newgren [andy.newgren@secondfirst.org](mailto:andy.newgren@secondfirst.org)

## FROM THE MODERATOR, SARAH REINOLD

On March 4, we gathered after the worship service to celebrate Courtney Jonsson and the work that she has done at SecondFirst Church. During the past two years, she has been a consistent participant in our worship services. She has challenged youth and adults alike through her activities and sermons. She has been a welcoming presence in the church with a ready smile and a quick joke. Most of all, she has strengthened the youth program by creating a sense of community and belonging within it by fostering relationships between the kids. Although we will miss Courtney, we are happy that she has had the opportunity to move back to her hometown and become involved in working with the youth of that community.



## ALL CHURCH BOWLING RECAP

All Church Bowling took place on Sunday, February 25. We had a ball! There were A LOT of gutter balls, a few strikes and lots of laughs! Thank you to everyone who came out to bowl!



## WEDNESDAY NIGHT MOVIES "THE BUTLER" APRIL 18 AND 25 AT 6:30 PM

After leaving the South as a young man and finding employment at an elite hotel in Washington, D.C., Cecil Gaines, played by Forest Whitaker, gets the opportunity of a lifetime when he is hired as a butler at the White House. Over the course of three decades that includes the 1960's, Cecil has a front-row seat to history and the inner workings of the Oval Office. However, his commitment to his White House 'First Family' leads to tension at home, alienating his wife, played by Oprah Winfrey, and causing conflict with his civil rights activist son. Contact: Dave Jones [davidj6226@aol.com](mailto:davidj6226@aol.com)

## JOIN THE CREATION JUSTICE TEAM

The Creation Justice Team is a group of church members working to enlighten ourselves and others on energy saving practices and methods that can be applied to everyday living. We are investigating everything from saving energy to the benefits of recycling. We are also looking at programs that exist for earth care awareness. If you are interested please join us on the third Tuesday at 7:00 pm.

## NEW MEMBER CLASSES

If you would like to be received into membership at SecondFirst Church or would just like to learn more about us, please join us for the dates and times listed below.

- Sharing Our Stories of Faith-Sunday, May 6 after worship with light refreshments.
- Sharing Our Collective Story of Faith-Wednesday, May 9, 6:00 - 8:00 pm for dinner.
- Living Into Our Faith-Sunday, May 20 meet at 8:30 am in the dining room then received into membership during worship.

Contact: Debbie Wise 815-963- 8431 or [debbie.wise@secondfirst.org](mailto:debbie.wise@secondfirst.org) to sign up.





## APRIL CALENDAR

### Sunday, April 1 Easter Sunday

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
No Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop  
No Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center

### Monday, April 2

Office Closed

### Tuesday, April 3

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
6:00 PM – Membership Ministry Team  
6:00 PM – Adult Christian Education Ministry Team

### Wednesday, April 4

No Staff Meeting  
5:30 PM – Prime Time  
5:30 PM – Tower Ringers

### Thursday, April 5

9:30 AM – Deaconesses  
9:30 AM – Carillons  
9:30 AM – Free Showers  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center  
5:30 PM – JD Annual Meeting  
6:00 PM – Bellcanto  
7:00 PM – Choir

### Friday, April 6

No scheduled activities

### Saturday, April 7

9:00 AM – Carillons rehearse  
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

### Sunday, April 8

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass  
9:20 AM - Wee Worship  
9:20 AM – Teen Worship  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
11:15 AM – Peanuts Rehearsal  
11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry Team  
11:15 AM - Family Christian Education Ministry Team  
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center

### Monday, April 9

9:30 AM – Free Showers  
5:00 PM - Deacons Ministry Team  
5:30 PM – Love Rockford

### Tuesday, April 10

8:00 AM – Men’s Fellowship  
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
9:30 AM – Presbytery Geneva  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
6:00 PM - DVT

### Wednesday, April 11

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting  
5:00 PM - Trustees  
5:30 PM – Prime Time  
5:30 PM - Tower Ringers

### Thursday, April 12

9:30 PM – Carillons  
9:30 AM – Free Showers  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center  
6:00 PM - Bellcanto  
7:00 PM – Choir

### Friday, April 13

1:00 PM – Horizons Bible Study

### Saturday, April 14

9:00 AM – Faithful Desegregation  
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic  
1:00 PM – Literacy Council Gathering

### Sunday, April 15

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
11:15 AM – Peanuts Rehearsal  
11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry  
11:15 AM – Music Ministry Team  
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center

### Monday, April 16

9:30 AM - Free Showers

### Tuesday, April 17

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
1:00 PM – Executive Committee  
5:30 PM – Missions Ministry Team  
7:00 PM – Creation Justice Committee

### Wednesday, April 18

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting

5:30 PM – Prime Time

5:30 PM - Tower Ringers  
6:30 PM – Movie “The Butler”

### Thursday, April 19

9:30 AM - Free showers  
9:30 AM – Carillons  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
6:00 PM – ARC Rec Night  
6:00 PM - Bellcanto  
7:00 PM - Choir

### Friday, April 20

5:30 PM – Transit Rec Night at Laser Quest

### Saturday, April 21

9:00 AM - Just Breathe 815 Pancake Fundraiser-gym  
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

### Sunday, April 22 Bell Sunday

9:00 AM – Koffee Klass  
9:30 AM – Peanuts Rehearsal  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop  
3:00 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center

### Monday, April 23

9:30 AM – Free Showers

### Tuesday, April 24

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop

11:30 AM – Walkers in gym

### Wednesday, April 25

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting  
5:30 PM - Last Prime Time  
5:30 PM – Tower Ringers  
6:30 PM – Movie “The Butler”

### Thursday, April 26

9:30 AM - Free showers  
9:30 AM – Carillons  
11:30 AM – Walkers in gym  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center  
5:30 PM – Governing Council

### Friday, April 27

No scheduled activities

### Saturday, April 28

9:00 AM – Love Rockford Event  
10:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

### Sunday, April 29

**Annual Program**  
9:00 AM – Koffee Klass  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Annual Program  
11:30 Youth Appetizer Cook-Off  
11:35 AM – Fair For All Shop  
4:30 PM – Just Breathe 815 Teen Drop In Center

### Monday, April 30

9:30 AM - Free Showers

## SAVE THE DATES

April 1: Easter

April 28: Love Rockford

April 29: Annual Program Meeting

May 6: Ring in Spring

May 6: New Member Class

May 17: Pop Up Dinner

May 19: Pilgrim Park Cleanup

June 1: Governing Council Retreat

June 8: UCC Conference Annual Celebration

June 10: Youth Car Wash

June 12: Wesley Bell Ringers

June 17: Transit Mission Trip to Kenosha, WI

June 24 : Youth Sunday

June 30: Potluck and Fireworks at Larsons

July 5: Tower Hill

August 19: All Church Picnic

August 26 : Joint Service

## APRIL: MUSIC FOR EVERYONE

by Paul Laprade, Music Director

And so comes April to our church, with trumpets, bells, organ, and strings on Easter to celebrate the risen Christ. The rest of April seems to be a musical potpourri for all. After the large choir/chamber orchestra celebration that opens the month, the Carillons return (on April 8th, The Sanctuary Choir sings again on 15th of the month, presenting Randall Thompson’s famous “Last Words of David” and the lively gospel work “Jesus Rose” for our service. ‘Bell Sunday’ graces our service on the 22nd, featuring the Peanut Bells and the rest of the bell ensembles of our church. (This is the last time we hear the bell groups till May 6th, in the annual Ring in Spring event.) On the 29th, the Sanctuary Choir, now joined by Dorothy Paige-Turner, sings the classics “Give Me Jesus” and “There’s A Sweet Sweet Spirit”. Longfellow must have been prescient regarding our April 2018 music plans when he wrote: If Spring came but once in a century, instead of once a year, or burst forth with the sound of an earthquake, and not in silence, what wonder and expectation there would be in all hearts to behold the miraculous change!

## GIVING AWAY OUR HYMNALS: THE CHALICE HYMNAL

The Chalice Hymnal will soon find a new home--in Georgia! Damascus Road Christian Church has been trying to raise funds for a hymnal for a few years. Rev. Suzanne Wages, pastor of the church, thanks SecondFirst in advance for the kind gift we are about to offer to them! Another 15 copies will also assist an emerging congregation in Kansas. Our generosity is truly appreciated. If you have any connections with churches needing hymnals, please send me an email. Homes for the three Presbyterian Hymnals (a brown hymnal and a contemporary hymnal came with our merger in addition to the familiar blue hymnal) still need to be found!

## PARK DISTRICT RETURNING THIS SUMMER

The Park District’s Therapeutic Recreational Summer program will return again this summer. The Park District was thrilled with our facility and loved the friendliness and support of our staff. The program will be here for Spring Break and will begin the Summer program on June 5 and will run through August.

## FAITHFUL DESEGREGATION - SATURDAY APRIL 14

**Faithful Desegregation, Saturday April 14, 9:00-11:30 a.m. SecondFirst Church.**

Rev. Rebecca, Andy Newgren and Rev. Matthew Johnson of the Unitarian Church have been leading a 4-part class on understanding race in American and the Rock River Valley. Churches and faith communities were invited to send 5 representatives each. Fourteen faith communities and over 100 people have participated. Our last class on April 14 will encourage the attendees to take this material to their churches, book groups, etc. as well as form anti-racism action groups on specific issues within education, criminal justice, employment and one TBD topic. Even if you have not attended yet and would like to, please join us. We have an in! :)





## WELCOME SUE KANTHAK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT

Hello!

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Sue Kanthak, the new Executive Director of Jeremiah Development. I spent my first two weeks trying to absorb the 10 years of knowledge that Michelle had to impart. I've never taken so many notes! This week was my first week on my own. Michelle did a wonderful job and I hope I can fill her shoes.

I lived in Rockford for 30 years before moving to the DC area in 2009. I made a choice to move back here because I believe in this town and in the people here. I want to see Rockford become the family-centered, neighborhood-centered community it once was. I remember thinking that Rockford isn't really a big town: it's a bunch of small neighborhoods. If people feel safe and empowered, these neighborhoods will become strong again. I'm excited to become an active part of the community again and look forward to leading Jeremiah Development.

## LOVE ROCKFORD 2018

Jeremiah Development, along with many community partners, is hosting the LOVE ROCKFORD event, on April 28, 2018, from 10 AM – 2 PM, with early registration at 9:30 AM. The purpose of this event is to link available resources to those in need in the Rockford community. Congregations, businesses, community agencies and volunteers will be working together to reach out to the underserved.

During our LOVE ROCKFORD day, residents will have the opportunity to be linked with a variety of counseling and housing services. Medical volunteers will be present to provide blood pressure checks, hearing and vision tests, as well as other services. Residents may choose to have a haircut, while the young may opt for a puppet show or to engage in other children's activities. Hungry stomachs will be met with a free lunch, and a box of food will be available to take home. Residents will be able to 'shop' in the clothing room for themselves and their family. Bicycles will be repaired and live music will engage the crowds. Also, various faith communities will be represented for those seeking spiritual renewal. We have created this event to link families to services to address long-term needs, as well as tend to immediate physical and emotional hardships.

You may already be aware that, according to the latest Annual Community Survey, 25% of Rockford residents reside below the poverty level, with 12% living 50% below the poverty level, significantly higher than the national poverty level of 13.3%. With one out of every four households living below the poverty level, it is crucial that we, as a community, take action. LOVE ROCKFORD provides the opportunity to establish relationships between the struggling families and our available resources.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating to LOVE ROCKFORD, please contact Melissa at [loverockfordil@gmail.com](mailto:loverockfordil@gmail.com). Your contribution and time will be responsibly utilized to lift the hearts and lives of our fellow residents.

## NOTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 22, 2018 GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING

The February Governing Council meeting began with a visit from PC(USA) representatives from the Committee on Ministry (COM). The visitors led the triennial visit by leading a discussion about our church. The meeting continued with an update by the church Treasurer who reported there was a slight deficit in January giving that is attributed to low Sunday service attendance due to the bad weather. The chair of the Trustees added that around \$23,000 in emergency repairs have taken place in 2018.

In new business, the chair of the Nominating Ministry Team presented a report about this year's nominating process. After eligible team members are asked if they would like to serve another term on a team, prospective new members will be approached.

In unfinished business, the Moderator expressed excitement over the great work that took place at the January Strategic Planning brainstorming session. Each team has been asked to prepare one or two goals to focus on in the upcoming years and these goals will make up the church's Strategic Plan. The Governing Council meeting concluded by giving the ministry team chairs time to share their goals with each other. The next meeting of Governing Council will be Thursday, April 26 at 5:30 in the 4th floor meeting room. Everyone is welcome to attend.



## OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

- Do you like to cook old fashioned home-cooked meals? Just Breathe 815 is looking for volunteers from our church to prepare a meal for the first Sunday of every month. Call Becky Erbe 815-963-8431 for more information.
- Love Rockford is coming on April 28 from 9:30am until 2pm. We are looking for volunteers for all areas. Our church will be the site for the free lunch (dining room), the Food Truck (garage area), the food and clothing check room, and the Children's activities (both in the gym.) Call Becky Erbe 815-963-8431.

March Neighborhood  
Numbers as of 3-16-18

15 showers

4 clothing help

2 diapers

## POU KINAM YO (POUKY) TRANSLATES TO "FOR THE PEOPLE" IN HAITI

Spring is a special time because of its promise of new beginnings. Fresh air is welcomed into our homes through newly opened windows, we hear the birds singing, we see buds getting ready to burst with beautiful flowers and leaves, and for many, the joy of gardening begins. It's exciting to get our hands dirty, work in the soil as we plant and wait patiently for the seeds to produce.

Church, we have a life-giving opportunity to help the village of Saut-d'Eau in Haiti, where James Casimir's family is from and where they still have relatives, friends and neighbors. There is much poverty, and the Casimir family requests our help in bringing agricultural assistance in the form of garden tools and seeds to their village. Our hope is to raise \$5,000 in a very short time in order to have tools and seeds ready for planting in April.

Imagine for a moment the village people of Saut-d'Eau knowing our church cares for their needs. Imagine too, they have the same friends as we, the Casimir family, who will be on this journey with them and reporting back to us their successes in using the tools and seeds to produce their own food.

"If we accompany our fellow man, it flips the impulse of 'how do we help them?' into an assertion----'we're in this together.' We are connected, tied and bound together." (Quote from: "In the Company of the Poor")

If you would like to join our Haiti Interest Group at SecondFirst Church, we would love to have you! Contact Roger ([rgreen97@aol.com](mailto:rgreen97@aol.com)) or Carolyn Greenlaw ([csgreen52@aol.com](mailto:csgreen52@aol.com)) to join in, or for more information. To donate, please send a check made out to SecondFirst Church with 'For My People' in Haiti in the memo line of the check. Contact: Zan Picchioni [zpicch@gmail.com](mailto:zpicch@gmail.com) Haiti Interest group member.

## INSTRUMENTS FOR HAITI: ON MARCH 8, 2010

On March 8, 2010, Second Congregational Church joined with John Jost and Bradley University to solicit instruments for a music school in Haiti. At the time, Haiti was recovering from a natural disaster that affected the Ecole Sainte Trinité, a school which hosts a summer music program for Haitian youth (in Léogâne). After advertising the opportunity through social media, we collected over \$70,000 of instruments for the school. In their kindness, American Airlines transported the instruments to Haiti free of charge. Professor Jost still remembers our response to this need and informs me that the school is still thriving. The instruments are still being used in helping students of the school develop their artistic skills in music.

