

## 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

# THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

*Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace*



### *A Little Bit from Becky E.*

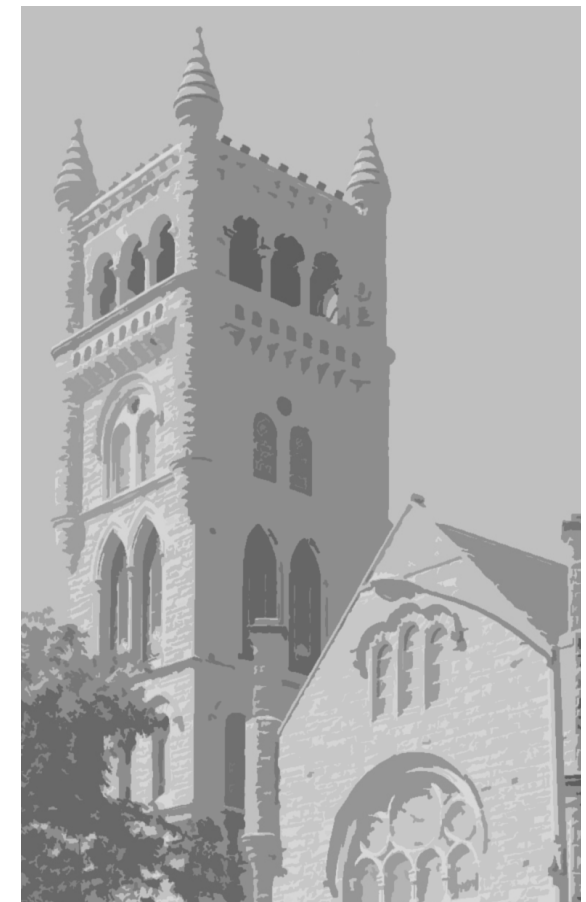
We are down to the final four days (as of Feb. 27) of our Overnight Café. We have been fortunate to have dedicated staff and volunteers who have helped the Café be a success. Thank you to everyone who participated! There are stories to tell, which will come in the next several weeks. Some are sad. Some are funny, and some will give

you hope in the human kind. A third of our guests that were regulars now have permanent living situations and many more are on a waiting list. We even had a few guests stay with us who had an apartment, but our gym was better and safer than where they were living.

Not only have our guests felt comfortable and safe in our gym, some guests are feeling comfortable in coming for worship. We have been welcoming and caring. Thank you Church!

### SAVE THE DATES

- April 5: Palm Sunday and Potluck
- April 9: Maundy Thursday
- April 12: Easter Sunday
- April 14: Presbytery Bolingbrook
- April 26: Annual Program Meeting
- April 26: Ring in Spring Bell Concert



## NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST UCC YOUTH INVITED TO UNITE! AT NATIONAL YOUTH EVENT 2020



Youth from across the United Church of Christ are invited to UNITE! at this summer's National Youth Event (NYE), July 22-25 in West Lafayette, Ind. The quadrennial event centered on the four pillars of faith, leadership, service and social justice is returning to the campus of Purdue University, with registration for groups now available on the NYE website. **Read more: [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)**

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) MOFFETT, NELSON SHARE A PULPIT AND A COMMON VISION FOR THE PC(USA)

A rare and rousing doubleheader sermon — one by the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett and the second by the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II — launched a combined gathering Thursday of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.



With a full day of work in front of them, both groups found morning nourishment from two of the best Presbyterian preachers on the planet. Moffett is president and executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency; Nelson is Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). **Read more: [www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org)**

## LENTEN JOURNEY AT SECONDFIRST CHURCH

### LENTEN SUPPER AND WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Wednesdays: March 4, 18, 25, April 1 beginning at 5:45pm in the Dining Room

Join us for a Soup Supper and Worship Experience based on the study, 'Faith of a Mockingbird.' There will be a brief video and discussion based on the characters of Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird to help us find our place in the world. The evening will also include prayer and song.

### A SPACE FOR MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

Thursdays: March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2 12:10-12:50

Want or need a place to get away from the day's or week's stress? Want an opportunity to get re-centered and calmed? Come participate in a half hour of mindfulness and guided meditation. People of all faiths or no faith are invited to participate. No pretzel positions needed. No prior experience necessary. Come try something new or come to a new place to do a wonderful practice. Hope to see you! This meditation will be held in the Sanctuary. Led by Sandy Williams, a local licensed clinical social worker and CranioSacral therapist, who focuses on holistic health.



SUNDAY, APRIL 12 AT 10:00 AM IN THE SANCUTARY.  
EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

## CHOOSING MUSIC AT SECONDFIRST

by Paul Laprade, Music Director

How do you choose the music for our services? Although I have the gracious opportunity to speak to people about this topic on several occasions, it seems as if this topic sustains interest throughout the year.

**The Word.** In my training and belief, the distance between the theme of a piece of music and the liturgical import of a service is a measurement of the success of the planning for the music in a service. Some of these choices are obvious: we should sing Easter music on Easter, and Christmas music on Christmas. More subtle is the reflection of the more general liturgical season upon our choices: no 'Alleluias' are to be heard during Lent, and Advent should include music regarding foreshadowing of a Savior's coming.

As we focus more precisely on individual Sundays, the narrative lectionary and sermon become the determinants of musical choice. With only a handful of exceptions in all my decades of planning church music, I have noted that the Holy Spirit usually inspires pastors' thoughts and words in the days immediately preceding a given Sunday, and that it is difficult to plan ahead as to specifically where the sermon may lead. The response of an individual to sing or play a sermon-related song at the last minute is different, as not only do we have music already prepared at times, but we can sometimes also invest the preparation time needed for a last-minute change in a service's liturgical focus. In that sense, solo music can often be much more responsive when lines of communication regarding a particular service are strong.

Clearly, the narrative lectionary bears a major role in determining musical choice, especially since ensemble music often needs to begin its preparation, weeks before a given service. I begin with the readings, explore exegesis provided by interpreters of the Word, and take time to pray, reflect, and hope that I will be led to understanding. I often will see that a few words might lead me to the choice of a choral work based upon the same passages as covered in the lectionary. In cases in which the lyrics of choral works do not match closely, I ask myself what the general import of the lectionary is and how I can reflect that musically. Our bell groups and instrumentalists can do this more easily, as they do not need to address the totality of lyrics when making these choices. Often, the selection of specific verses to sing from a hymn is a reflection of the attempt to mirror the lectionary in our communal singing.

It is also important to note that ensemble directors also have the added challenge of seeing if desired works for a specific Sunday can be performed on that Sunday. How can one perform a work which features additional divided soprano parts (divisi) if half the soprano section bought tickets to a Packers or Bulls game (or has family visiting from out of town, etc.)? What if four people from the bell ensembles suddenly come down with the flu, despite avoiding shared bells? These surprises even shape Christmas Eve services, and cause us to search for 'guests' to ring or sing at the last minute.

Despite so many resources and the clear direction provided by a lectionary, there are challenges. Currently, I am grateful that the Carillons are providing music for January 26, because the lectionary reading is about exorcism! Joyce Zartman has avoided some options here, and so this is one of the times that the music choice will support our notion of God's love rather than a more literal reading of the service's lectionary. (As an aside, Julie Cook Ramirez did find a Dick Litterst arrangement of "Tubular Bells" from The Exorcist in our files, but we will save that for another year. I have no idea what I would have chosen for choir, and I probably would have asked John DeWaters for suggestions, as he is more imaginative than I in these areas!)

**Style.** As described many times in The Tower and in discussions with members of the church, an inclusive variety of musical styles is a mindful reflection of our charge to be an inclusive church. Personally, there are Sundays when I would like to perform nothing but the music of, say, Benjamin Britten (or the amazing Spanish composer Luis de Victoria) but to whom would that speak? We have on occasion even had a "Beatles Sunday", and I would not be opposed to a U2 Sunday, but again, who would feel included or excluded? A balance between these considerations is always at work.

Pastor Rebecca weighed in on the stylistic form that our traditional Sunday hymn collection should adopt. She is very clear in her belief that the service should begin with a traditional well-loved hymn. These include "Holy Holy Holy" and "The Church's One Foundation." The final hymn is one in a collection of 13 'upbeat' songs, some old some new. Among these are "Siyahamba," "Standing on the Promises" and its cousin "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," and Pastor Rebecca's favorite, "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me". The middle hymn can, by design, stylistic elevate/excite the mood toward the offertory or can be a poignant reflection of the sermon and theme of the service. "How Great Thou Art" has been heard as a middle hymn, but so has "Everytime I Feel the Spirit."

Valerie Blair is an example of someone who plans her music carefully to support our services. I often have to remind myself not only that her preludes and postludes are great pieces of music, prepared faithfully and played well, but that they are integral to our experience of the service in that they are always reflecting the lectionary. Her preludes are chosen carefully to set a particular tone: did you notice that the first piece heard in Advent was played by the organ, and that it quoted "Veni Veni Emmanuel", an Advent melody? Have you noticed that her postludes reflect the service well in terms of theme? I encourage you to sit a little longer, listen a bit deeper, remain engaged prayerfully, and think about the way in which the service is begun and concluded through the skill of Valerie's inimitable finger and footwork at SecondFirst.

I hope this overview has been helpful in covering some of the considerations regarding music planning for our services. We are fortunate in that budgets are well-planned so that monetary issues do not drive the most significant of our musical choices, and that we have the resources to make important choices throughout the year. Nonetheless, we do need more members in our ensembles. Your support is always appreciated, and we invite you to sing and ring with us, because, as always, we need new members in our ensembles!

In gratitude, your Music Director,  
Paul Laprade

## JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN

Saturday, March 14, 10:00 am

Our next turn at the Saturday neighborhood soup kitchen is March 14. If you'd like to try your hand at preparing and/or serving a tasty lunch, then here's your chance! The team will work from 10:00 am until around 1:15 pm. You are welcome for part or all of the time. You will need to bring a baseball cap or other head covering along with your best smile. Contact: Jean Herro 815-399-7213 or call the church office to sign up.

## THE GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY CHOIR IS COMING! WOULD YOU HELP US HOST?

Wednesday, March 11, 7:00 pm

SecondFirst Church will be hosting the Greenville University Choir for a stellar performance of sacred works. Under the direction of Dr. Jeffery Wilson, the 26-member Greenville University Choir and Chamber Singers will be presenting "Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder", a program in four parts, following four proscriptions outlined in Acts 10:4-32. The choir will come to SecondFirst in the afternoon of the 11th and enjoy a dinner before performing. They are asking us to provide homestays for their members (and breakfast) before they continue to additional stops on their tour. Would you have room for these fine singers? We need to house all 26 members, who are roughly equally split in terms of gender. If interested, please leave your name with the office, your preference (if any, for men or women to stay), and any common issues such as pets that may be of concern to singers with allergies. Questions? Contact: paul.laprade@secondfirst.org



## IMPORTANT DATES DURING LENT

**Wednesdays, March 4, 18, 25, and April 1**

Lenten Supper with Worship Learning Experience  
Dinner 5:30 pm, Worship 6:30 pm

**Thursdays, March 5 - April 2, 12:10 pm - 12:50 pm**

Mindfulness with Sandy Williams

**Wednesday, March 11, 7:00 pm**

Greenville University Choir Concert

**Sunday, April 5, 10:00 am**

Palm Sunday Worship and Potluck

**April 9, 6:30 pm**

Maundy Thursday Worship

**April 12, 10:00 am**

Easter Sunday

## UPDATE FROM YOUR TRUSTEES MINISTRY TEAM

By Roger Greenlaw, Chair of Trustees Ministry Team

Trustees have nearly completed the projects associated with making room for KFACT. That has included new windows in Emerson Hall and much of Gordon Chapel. The Bell choirs moved to the 4th floor chapel and their new carpet and paint has been ordered and paid for, and will be installed at the end of their spring season. After renovation of the 3rd floor KidZone, the space seems to be serving our kids and youth well, except for the need to reinforce this space as a safe zone. We are working with Family Christian Ed Ministry Team to determine what type of alarm system or 'panic button' that would best serve this space, our children and the youth leaders.

New flooring that matches the KidZone was extended across the 3rd floor hallway behind the balcony from the elevator across to the entrance to Emerson Hall. This area now has a clean and fresh look. The former Nursery Area next to the church office is now 'The Gathering Place' and contains the Bride's Area, a small group meeting area that seats 6-8 persons around a nice table, and the large, functional Adult Education space that has the big screen 'Smart TV' and seating for 20-30 people. We just completed installation of new counter tops in the entry way and the Bride's changing room with updated plumbing. Koffee Klass actually has an attractive coffee buffet with a new Keurig Machine that provides excellent coffee to those who gather at 8:30-8:45 am before Sunday school class.

The latest project was to finish renovation of the office. Debbie's desk has been sent out for repairs and refinishing new carpet and paint give the office a fresh functional look. Jeff's work room and Nancy's office were included. Stop in and take a look!

Trustees and Foundation have formed a long-range planning group to develop a 30 year plan for building maintenance and renovation and this will include looking at building décor and function as well as sustainability issues. A subgroup has formed to look at what a 2020 kitchen upgrade would look like...and cost.

If you would like to have input on any of these and/or future projects, just let someone on Trustees know of your interest. It is not necessary to sign up for 3 years on a Ministry Team to have input, you can just join a committee for a specific project if you like.



What's new in Fair Trade?  
 - New Chocolate Bar-with coconut  
 - Soaps: Clove, Lemongrass  
 - Cacao Crosses made from recycled glass



Rev. Gary Stillwell and Becky Erbe during service in February.



The Men's Prayer Breakfast takes place on Tuesday mornings from 7:00-8:00am. They have a delicious breakfast, fellowship and prayer.



Church World Services honors our church. Our congregation has been the leading CROP Hunger Walk team in Rockford for many years. Rockford's walk raised nearly \$32,000 of which our church gave \$7,429.

An Evening in Paris

Save the date!  
 April 25, 2020

Stay tuned for more info!

Jeremiah DEVELOPMENT ROCKFORD ILLINOIS



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS

### OVERNIGHT CAFÉ By Sarah Reinold

It is 12° as I'm sitting in my warm house. I can see the snowflakes falling outside the windows and I can hear the snowplows scraping past. I'm grateful to be safely inside. This winter, the Overnight Cafe is making it possible for people across Northern Illinois to be safely inside during the long and cold winter nights. The community has come together to support this program. SecondFirst Church is offering its facilities and leadership. Volunteers spend time preparing food and welcoming our guests. Community organizations and businesses drop off donations of food and warm clothing. Several grants have funded the Overnight Cafe. A grant from the city of Rockford and The Dr. Louis & Violet Ruben Fund of the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois Community Grants Program have supplied the funds needed to keep the Overnight Cafe open. Thanks to everyone who is making the Overnight Cafe possible!



### WHO IS THE GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY CHOIR?

Performing Wednesday, March 11, 7:00 pm

Although they have performed at SecondFirst Church in the past, many people are unfamiliar with this wonderful choir from only 45 miles out from St. Louis. They will be performing a FREE CONCERT for us on Wednesday, March 11, at 7:00 pm! Here are more details about this fine ensemble and its director.

The Greenville University Choir is the flagship choral ensemble of Greenville University. The Choir presents as many as 20 off-campus performances each year as part of its annual tour. Membership consists of undergraduate students from various fields of study, and rehearsals occur four times a week. The Choir joins with the Greenville Choral Union in regular concerts of larger choral-orchestral works, including recent performances of Handel's Messiah, Bach's Magnificat, and Mozart's Requiem.

### THRIFT STORE THANK YOU!

The Thrift Store would like to thank everyone who has donated items for the Thrift Shop. Some of the money we received has been donated to the Church which include:

- Refrigerator and Freezer for the Kitchen
- Framing for Marilyn Erickson's artwork hanging in the Dining Room
- Money for Serious Soup
- Money for KidZone
- Money for the General Fund

### OPPORTUNITY FOR GIVING: OGHS

On March 22 we will accept an offering to support One Great Hour of Sharing, commonly called OGHS. The funds raised support activities in disaster relief and refugee relief, both in the US and around the world. How to give: use the special envelope or make a check out to the church and write OGHS in the memo line. The world thanks you!



### FOOD PANTRY DRIVE DURING LENT

The Missions Team will be collecting non-perishable food items for the Rock River Pantry. We will also collect the plastic and paper grocery bags that you just may have more of than you can use! Leave your food gifts in the wooden crate at the back of the sanctuary and we will transport them to the pantry. The needs are varied so all foods will be helpful. Contact: Marge Maynard mtm.home@me.com

### CORNED BEEF AND CABBAGE DINNER Saturday, March 14, 6:00 pm

Our annual corned beef and cabbage dinner will be in the Church Dining Room, Saturday March 14, at 6:00 pm. Corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots and beverages will be provided. For those who are not fans of corned beef, Chicken and vegan will be available if requested before the event. Hot dogs and potato chips will be available for children. Please bring a salad, bread, or desert for the buffet table (or anything else you wish to go with the above menu.) The cost is \$8 per person payable at the door or in advance, Children under 12 are free. Entertainment will be by SecondFirst's own Church Street String Band. Please RSVP to the church office 815-963-8431 or Debbie Wise by Thursday, March 5.

# MARCH CALENDAR

## Communion Sunday, March 1

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
 11:15 AM – Peanuts  
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

## Monday, March 2

10:00 AM – Free Showers  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

## Tuesday, March 3

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

## Wednesday, March 4

9:30 AM – Deaconess  
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 5:30 PM – Lenten Supper  
 6:00 PM – Martin Ringers  
 6:30 PM – Lenten Worship

## Thursday, March 5

9:30 AM – Carillons  
 12:10 PM – Mindfulness Meditation  
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos  
 7:00 PM – Choir

## Friday, March 6

No Scheduled Activities

## Saturday, March 7

9:30 AM – Carillons  
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

## Sunday, March 8

Carillons  
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
 11:15 AM – Peanuts  
 11:15 AM – For All Shop

## Monday, March 9

10:00 AM – Free Showers  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup  
 5:00 PM – Deacons

## Tuesday, March 10

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
 12:00 PM – Adult Ed  
 6:00 PM – DVT

## Wednesday, March 11

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 5:00 PM – Trustees  
 6:00 PM – Martin Ringers  
 7:00 PM – Greenville Choir Concert

## Thursday, March 12

9:30 AM – Carillons  
 12:10 PM – Mindfulness Meditation  
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos  
 7:00 PM – Choir

## Friday, March 13

No Scheduled Activities

## Saturday, March 14

10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen  
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic  
 6:00 PM – Corned Beef Dinner

## Sunday, March 15

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
 11:15 AM – Peanuts  
 11:15 AM – Music Ministry Team  
 11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry Team  
 11:15 AM – Family CE  
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

## Monday, March 16

8:00 AM – Park District Monday-Friday  
 10:00 AM – Free Showers  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

## Tuesday, March 17

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
 5:00 PM – Missions  
 6:00 PM – Executive Committee

## Wednesday, March 18

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 5:30 PM – Lenten Supper  
 6:00 PM – Martin Ringers  
 6:30 PM – Lenten Worship

## Thursday, March 19

9:30 AM – Carillons  
 12:10 PM – Mindful Meditation  
 6:00 PM – ARC  
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos  
 7:00 PM – Choir

## Friday, March 20

No Scheduled Activities

## Saturday, March 21

10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

## Sunday, March 22

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
 11:15 AM – Peanuts  
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

## Monday, March 23

10:00 AM – Free Showers  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

## Tuesday, March 24

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop  
 6:00 PM – Earth Care

## Wednesday, March 25

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 5:30 PM – Lenten Supper  
 6:00 PM – Martin Ringers  
 6:30 PM – Lenten Worship

## Thursday, March 26

9:30 AM – Carillons  
 12:10 PM – Mindful Meditation  
 5:30 PM – Governing Council  
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos  
 7:00 PM – Choir

## Friday, March 27

No Scheduled Activities

## Saturday, March 28

10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

## Bell Sunday, March 29

8:30 AM – Koffee Klass  
 9:20 AM – Peanuts  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour  
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

## Monday, March 30

10:00 AM – Free Showers  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

## Tuesday, March 31

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

## RING IN SPRING! TO BENEFIT CASA

BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ, DIRECTOR OF HANDBELL MINISTRIES

We are very excited to announce the beneficiary of this year's Ring in Spring will be Winnebago County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), which speaks up for children who've been abused or neglected by empowering members of the community to volunteer as advocates for them in the court system. This suggestion came from one of our ringers and was resoundingly agreed upon by our pastors. Several members of our congregation have volunteered with CASA, including Zan Picchioni, who currently serves on their Marketing Committee. Zan introduced me to CASA's program director, Jillisa Bondurant, who is very excited to partner with us for this event.

Please join us for the Ring in Spring on Sunday, April 26 at 3:00 pm in our beautiful sanctuary for a meaningful afternoon of music and mission. We'll be sharing our usual eclectic mix of sacred and secular selections, including new and old favorites from film and popular music. (Ever heard "Bohemian Rhapsody" on handbells?) All four of our handbell/handchime ensembles will be performing, so mark your calendars NOW for a great concert benefiting an extremely worthy cause. Let's pack the house and show the CASA folks we care about the children in our community. For more information, contact Julie: julie.cookramirez@secondfirst.org or 815-543-9739.



**CASA**  
 Court Appointed Special Advocates  
 FOR CHILDREN

## CHOIR MEMBERS NEEDED



Have you noticed that our choir is a bit thinner these days? Illness, pressing obligations, and the desire to avoid Rockford winter weather is taking a toll on the choir...we have even needed to cancel pieces we have worked on due to these challenges. Did you sing in your high school or college choir?

We would really love to have you join us, even if the commitment is for a short time. We have fun, we learn great music, and it is all done for the glory of God. Come surprise us at a Thursday evening rehearsal (7-8:30pm) or on a Sunday morning at 9am. Even if you simply want to just 'sit in' for a while, there is room in our song for you!

Paul Laprade, Music Director

## EASTER SUNDAY FLOWERS

We will again have colorful pots of Spring flowers for the Chancel area of the Sanctuary, to celebrate Easter morning.

- » Tulips in yellow, pink or purple are \$11.00
- » White Easter Lilies are \$17.00
- » Azaleas in deep pink are \$16.50

Orders are due by March 18 if you want a specific color. After that date, we can't guarantee the color. If you would like to order a blooming plant call or stop by the office and let us know what kind and what color you want. If you would like to acknowledge a loved one please provide that information at the time you order. If you prefer to mail your order in, please use this form or just send a note telling us what you would like.



EASTER FLOWERS  
 ORDER FORM

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Loved Ones \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Flower & Color \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Plants \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_