

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/

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 Rockford, Illinois

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



A WORD FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Church,

The world is crazy right now. Hold onto God and one another for stability, strength and hope. If you are feeling lost, please reach out. We pray for our public leaders, we pray for our schools, we pray for the teachers and the children. We pray for everything that used to feel important before this pandemic and racial unrest!

With great blessing, we know a God who steadies us. A God who knows the direction we are going in before we go there. And a God who tells us when to turn to the right and to the left. May we be open to God's leading and pushing. May we serve God with our whole hearts, even when they feel a bit taxed.

May our church be a bright spot in our lives and for our entire community and world. We have opened the Rockford Cooling Center in our gym (details within) AND put an enormous sign of hope on the outside of our gym wall thanks to many of you and community mural artist, Tia Richardson.

Because your dreams and those of our neighborhood and community are reflected in that artwork, it has many beautiful sentiments. One of them is racial justice, equity and reconciliation. We will continue to stand for marginalized peoples and continue to say Black Lives Matter. We will always be on the lookout for the next thing we can do or say to bring justice, hope and love. May God lead us toward new life and new joy.

Peace to you,
 Rebecca

JOIN US FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Sundays in August
 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

Kids of all ages!
 Friends welcome.

Led by Pastor Becky Erbe

Call the church to sign up and VBS packages will be delivered to your door.

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 LOVE THY NEIGHBOR: FOOD COLLECTION, DISTRIBUTION MINISTRIES PICK UP AS PANDEMIC SURGES**



United Church of Christ congregations from coast to coast are finding ways to fill the gaps the coronavirus pandemic is creating in their communities. Many of those ministries revolve around

food. Two small faith communities – a city church in a waterfront neighborhood in Seattle and a country church in West Milton, Pa. – both established feeding programs because of COVID-19. One collects staples for the local food bank. The other functions as an area distribution center. **Read more:** www.ucc.org

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
 DIVERSE LEADERS DISCUSS HOW RACISM, PANDEMIC IMPACT THEM AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**

In the latest episode of "Everyday God-Talk," a trio of diverse church leaders share how living with the twin pandemics of the coronavirus and racism is affecting them and their respective communities.



In the first of a three-part conversation, available here, host So Jung Kim asked her guests – the Revs. Ashley DeTar Birt and Alexandra Zareth – whether they would use the words "protest" or "uprising" to describe the Black Lives Matter movement. **Read more:** www.presbyterianmission.org

THE COMMUNITY MURAL IS COMPLETE!



The mural is up on the wall! After much anticipation, and participation from hundreds of Rockford community members, the mural painted on 55 aluminum panels were carefully installed by Signs Now, with the guidance of Scott Hill. The mural panels were painted last fall indoors, some of them taken to different parts of Rockford so more people could be involved. In all roughly 230 people helped paint the background, from ages 2 to 97! The masterpiece was created by lead artist Tia Richardson who included different artists helping from Rockford and around the Region. The matching donor and name of the mural was announced on Monday, July 27 at 11:00 a.m. on Facebook Live.

Many thanks to the original Membership Ministry Team who championed this idea, Steve Showers, Jim Delmore and the Trustees for attending to all the details, everyone who dreamed of Rockford's future and all donated time and money. Our community was made stronger and more vibrant because of your gifts.

A little bit from Pastor Becky...

What a week we just had! Some good things happened; we opened the Cooling Center. We are only having a few guests so far but as word gets out, we will have more. The mural is up and it looks beautiful! We are preparing to restart Serious Soup serving warm bag lunches to go. We have received a grant from HomeStart for \$2500 for our Serious Soup program. Thank you to Sarah Reinhold for writing the grant.

We do have some changes coming up. As most of you know Aubrey Barnett our Children's and Youth Director has resigned. Her last day with us is this Sunday July 26. Join us as we say goodbye during a special Zoom event at 11:00am. Aubrey has been a great addition to our church and we are sad to see her go. In the meantime, I will be taking over the reigns for a while as our children's minister. I did begin at this church as the Christian Ed director many years ago. I might have a few cobwebs to dust off but should be able to jump back in the saddle. If you have any questions feel free to give me a call.

ROCKFORD COOLING CENTER



Dates: July 15, 2020 through September 6, 2020

Daily: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Let's help keep our most vulnerable citizens cool this summer! Due to COVID19 restrictions, the locations in our community that have traditionally been used for cooling centers during the summer are either not open or have greatly reduced the number of people they are able to serve due to social distancing requirements. Our friends and neighbors are suffering in the heat. Several agencies (see below for list) are coming together with funding from the United Way to open the Rockford Cooling Center at SecondFirst Church. This program is fully staffed, and all procedures have been approved by the Winnebago County Health Department.

COMMUNITY PROJECT PARTNERS

Many thanks to the United Way for funding and the following agencies for their support:

- Dr. Sandra Martell, Winnebago County Health Department Administrator
- Todd Kisner, Winnebago County Health Dept. Director of the Center for Health Protection
- Mallory Wrenn, Winnebago County Emergency Manager
- Rev. Rebecca White Newgren, SecondFirst Church
- Pastor Becky Erbe, SecondFirst Church
- Sarah Parker, Executive Director, Shelter Care Ministries
- Heather Beaufls, Grant and Contract Manager, Remedies Renewing Lives
- Michele Pankow, Division Chief of Operations, Rockford Fire Department
- Kay Larrick, Executive Director, Carpenter's Place

We are looking for volunteers to help offer hospitality.

Each day will have two shifts; 10am-1pm and 1pm-4pm. To sign-up, call the office 815-963-8431

"HOME, HOME IS THE STAGE, WHERE RECORDING IS NOW QUITE THE RAGE"

by Paul Laprade

It was suggested that I could write about what it is like to record music at home. Rather than explain, I would like to recast my narrative in terms of a few dictums:

- » Don't be afraid to put a dress shirt on top of your pjs.
- » Don't let the cat attack your feet while you pedal on the piano.
- » Don't forget to thank Andy Newgren.
- » Don't become convinced that transferring video from .MOV to MP4 will mean that the sound will remain intact 100% of the time.
- » Don't believe that the congregation you are trying to sing to truly looks like a camera lens, even if it has been a while.
- » Don't assume that the lighting needed for seeing music at night is enough for your face to be seen.
- » Don't forget to tell your sons that you are recording so you don't hear "Dad, why do you keep singing that song? I want to listen to Chance the Rapper and you are too loud."
- » Don't record on Saturdays or holidays unless you are convinced that the number of sirens will decrease.
- » Don't underestimate the joy of creating a decent recording during attempts #3-7.
- » Don't place a glass of water (needed for singing) near the piano when a thirsty cat is on the run.
- » Don't refuse to embrace the opportunity to say to yourself: "There is tomorrow. It will be better."
- » Don't let the cat jump up onto the piano or computer while recording.
- » Don't fear that fun changes in style or harmony need to be avoided (after all, few have hymns in hand)!
- » Don't get too giddy after take #15, because the result is rarely useful for church.
- » Don't permit your inner critic to chime in too often.
- » Don't allow the confusion from an recording program starting with unusual delay be apparent in a sustained scowl through two verses.
- » Don't believe that the Stevie Wonder version you sang after a few 'normal' versions really will be appropriate for a standard church service recording.
- » Don't dream for a moment that one of the best performances of your life will be captured by a reasonable video. (Corollary: don't let the disappointment be seen in the next take.)
- » Don't think that the music stand on which you placed the old laptop that died yesterday is strong enough to keep a slightly heavier new laptop from shrinking the stand height during your recording (and don't assume that the increased slouching while you are adjusting won't be apparent when you review the video).
- » Don't wait (out of habit) for the inimitable Valerie Blair to provide some amazing piano lick that makes you sound better.
- » Don't underestimate how strong sunshine can turn you into a singing silhouette.
- » Don't forget that you are singing for the Glory of God.



THANK YOU, AUBREY BARNETT!

We are grateful for Ms. Aubrey's ministry in our midst for the last two years. We will miss her as she moves from Christian family ministry to justice work in the community. Aubrey's last day was Sunday, July 26 on staff, but we welcome her to continue to participate in the life of the church.





EARTH CARE NEWS

In the last few months, it's been easy to set aside my usual efforts to be more sustainable. Now, as we are starting to go back to normal life, I wanted to share an article that has helped me get back on track, and hopefully you will find some good reminders, too. "Wait...there's more than 3R's for Recycling? Not just reduce, reuse, recycle?", was written by Holly Hansen, Americorps Education Member and published on the Severson Dells blog February, 2020. She reminds us of more ways "to think about our waste and what we can do to not have as much." Questions? Contact Linda Mohaupt.



CHURCH LANDSCAPING CLEAN UP

The landscaping around the church needs much help in cleaning up around the church. Since we are still under stay safe restrictions, I am not calling for a general work day for cleanup. Therefore, I have put a list of areas that help. They are broken down so no one area is too large. I do not expect to do any plantings until some of the restrictions are lifted. If you would like to help in cleanup decide on an area you would like to work. We will make sure you will not be near other workers. Please follow all distancing guidelines. Of course, if you are working as a family, distancing may not be a problem. Contact: Ron Schaad for questions.



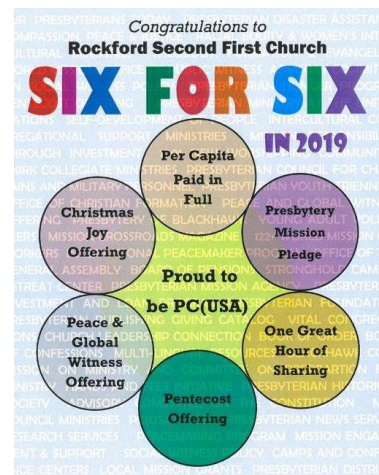
CERTIFICATE OF COMMITMENT: EQUAL EXCHANGE

Our sales put us in the top 5% of congregations and community groups Equal Exchange works with around the country. Together we are making big change for small farmers. Thank you, Eleanor, and to all who continue to support our Fair Trade Store



ROCKFORD COOLING CENTER OPENS

With a vote of Governing Council, group effort of many Rockford agencies, the funding from United Way, the Rockford Cooling Center opened in our gym on Wednesday. It will be open 10:00-4:00 daily through Labor Day weekend for anyone who needs to cool down. More details on pg. 2.



SIX FOR SIX

We thank you for your continued commitment to the Presbytery and the denomination as a whole. The recognition is for churches who have:

- paid their per capita in full,
- contributed to all four churchwide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
- supported Blackhawk Presbytery with a Mission pledge and giving.

JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN Saturday, September 5, 10:00 am

It will be Labor Day weekend so perhaps you have time and energy to help prepare lunches for the Neighborhood Saturday Soup Kitchen at the Jubilee Center? Mark your calendar now and give Jean Herro a call. We will be making sack lunches again so 3-5 helpers will suffice. Thanks! Marge Maynard

CHURCH PICNIC CANCELLED

Please note that the church picnic originally scheduled for August 16 has been cancelled. The Fellowship Ministry Team will be meeting soon to discuss for the Fall and for the remainder of the calendar year.

HUMAN LIBRARY EXPERIENCE RECAP

The Deacons sponsored the first Human Library experience. Normally, three or four books are presented in 15 minute sessions during one evening. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we had four Zoom sessions on consecutive Fridays in June. Those who participated were thoroughly enlightened by the presentations. We heard from Kathie "How Alcoholism Stole My Father", Matt "My Life Being Trans", Sharon "White Woman, Black Man", and Freddy "My Life with Undocumented Parents". Each gave a moving account of their experiences. After we have had a chance to review the feedback sheets, the Deacons will consider having additional sessions in the fall, most likely on a different night. Thank you to Linda Oshita for being the point person for this endeavor.

COFFEE CLASS

Coffee Class continues through the summer with new and varied topics every Sunday at 8:30 a.m. Join us for fellowship and Christian formation. Email adulteducation@secondfirst.org for the Zoom link each week.



MEDITATIONS AT THE MURAL

Tuesday, August 11, 9:00 a.m.
Thursday, August 20, 7:00 p.m.
Led by Rev. Rebecca

Allowing the Psalms to guide us, the art to enliven us, prayer to enfold us and God to lead us, we will gather on the West side of the church twice in August. We will provide socially distant chairs (or you may bring a mat/blanket to sit on the ground). Masks (or face shields) are required.



THE PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION ILLINOIS CONFERENCE WELCOMES THE REVEREND MOLLY CARLSON AS OUR NEW CONFERENCE MINISTER!

Rev. Carlson was recommended to the Illinois Conference Personnel Committee and then the Conference Council by the Conference Minister Search Committee after a nationwide search that included a pool of several exceptional candidates. Molly's election by the delegates of the Illinois Conference at the Annual Meeting (held virtually via YouTube, Zoom, and SurveyMonkey), was culminated today, Saturday, June 27th, with a 99% affirmative vote. We are excited that Molly will be able to start her ministry in the Illinois Conference on August 1st, and we look forward to partnering with her as we move forward together as the Illinois Conference!



Please join us every Sunday for at 10am on Facebook! We broadcast our worship service through a Facebook Livestream. Please help us spread the word. While physically apart, this is an opportunity to come together!

You can find the Worship Order for each week through the weekly Facebook event page, or on our website: www.secondfirst.org/what-to-expect. If you cannot join us on Facebook Live, consider calling into the conference call line: Dial 630-580-1541 then use Access Code 205053.

SUMMARY OF THE 224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2020) OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)



The historic 224th General Assembly (2020) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) took place over four days: June 19, 20, 26, and 27, 2020. The scaled-down assembly gathering was the first to be held totally online with commissioners and advisory delegates

participating via Zoom, while the Stated Clerk, Co-Moderators, parliamentarians, and technical personnel worked out of the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

STATED CLERK REELECTION

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, was reelected as Stated Clerk for another four-year term.

Co-Moderators of the 224th General Assembly (2020)

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart and the Reverend Gregory Bentley were elected on the first ballot as the Co-Moderators of the 224th General Assembly (2020). They will go down in church history as the first Co-Moderators/Moderators to moderate an online assembly. Due to church travel restrictions, the Co-Moderators plan to connect with presbyteries and churches across the denomination electronically with hopes of traveling on behalf of the church when restrictions are lifted.

RACIAL INJUSTICE

Commissioners passed a resolution entitled "Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action." Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, the Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association, and the Assembly Committee on Business Referral worked jointly on the motion that provides for the following:

- PC(USA) churches and presbyteries would approve antiracism policies.
- PC(USA) agencies are to review business items to be referred to the 225th General Assembly (2022) to ensure coverage under social witness policy.
- A response to the COVID-19 pandemic was approved, seeking compassion and justice for the most vulnerable for the disease, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals as well as LGBTQ+ and persons with HIV.

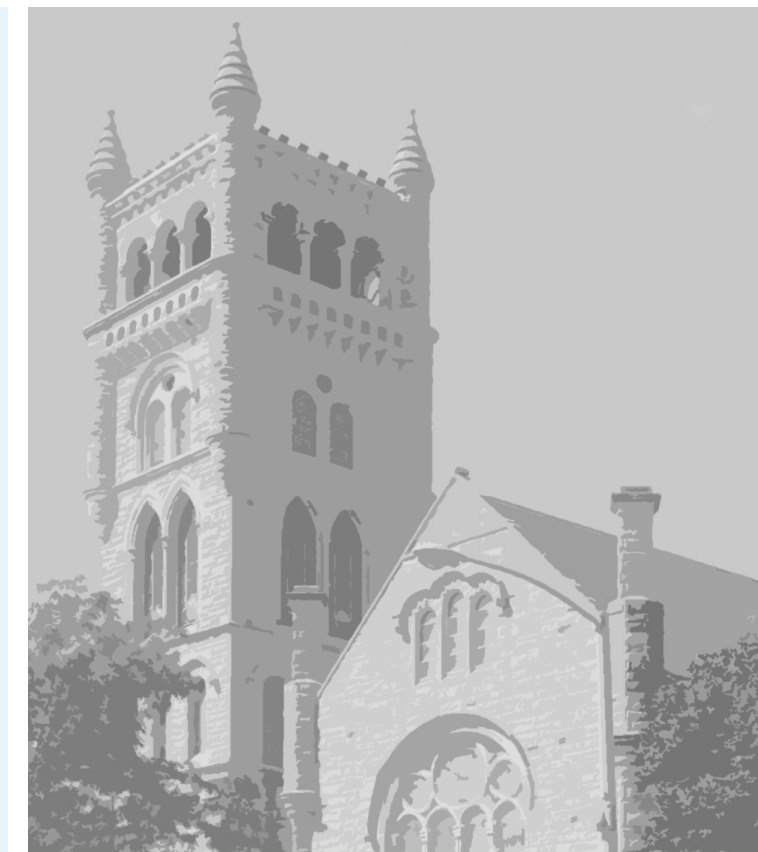
An eight minute and 46 second silent vigil was held before the end of the assembly to acknowledge the time George Floyd was pinned at the neck by a Minneapolis police officer. Committee/Commission Reports

The 224th General Assembly (2020) voted that the work/reports by the Moving Forward Implementation Commission, the Special Committee on Per Capita and Financial Sustainability, and the report of the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force, would be taken up by commissioners to the next assembly.

MINISTRY TEAMS MEETING INFORMATION

- FELLOWSHIP:** 3rd Sunday 11:15 am
 - DEACONESSES:** 1st Wed 9:00 am
 - FAMILY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** 3rd Sunday 11:15 am
 - DEACONS:** 2nd Monday 5:00 pm
 - DVT:** 2nd Tuesday 6:00 pm
 - MISSIONS:** 3rd Tuesday 5:30 pm
 - MUSIC:** 3rd Sunday 11:15 am
 - TRUSTEES:** 2nd Wednesday 5:00 pm
 - GOVERNING COUNCIL:** 4th Thursday 5:30 pm
 - ADULT EDUCATION:** 2nd Tuesday 12:00 pm
- These meetings are subject to change*

To learn more about each of these Ministry Teams and their area of focus, visit our website: www.secondfirst.org/ministry-teams/ And, if you're interested in getting involved, please connect with us!



Above: The first panel of the mural is hung on the wall. Below: One by one, each panel is hung, bringing to life this community project.

