

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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JUNE 2021

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



FROM REV. REBECCA WHITE NEWGREN

Church,

Belonging is for real. If we as human creatures do not feel like we belong, we are lost and make terrible decisions. In this last year Covid has tested our sense of belonging. I used to go to the gym, where people knew my name and my rhythms and patterns and then it was gone. We couldn't even go into the church building, so did we really still belong to each other as church? I'm proud of the ways you all stayed connected to each other and the ways our ministry teams pivoted into a quarantine reality. But that doesn't mean it wasn't hard. I was talking to one mother this week whose husband really struggled losing all the places he belonged and turned toward drinking. Another mother I know, when the patterns of life were pulled out from under her young daughter, she lost control and began acting out and running away. As human beings we are creatures of habit and without them much pain ensued. Now those of us who are vaccinated are looking in the rearview mirror thinking, wow, Covid was really hard. And that is because our sense of belonging to one another, to other humans, shifted radically.

We have just walked through Paul's letter to the Galatians on Sunday mornings, for the first century Jesus followers and for us as well, the Apostle Paul is trying to say, you belong. God's grace is big enough, Christ's faith is wide enough, the church is solid enough (though we are not perfect) to include you, to love you and walk with you in this life. You belong. You belong to God. You belong to Christ. You belong to the Church. You belong to one another. You belong. Take that Covid quarantine isolation. God can and has overcome isolation already. You live in Christ.

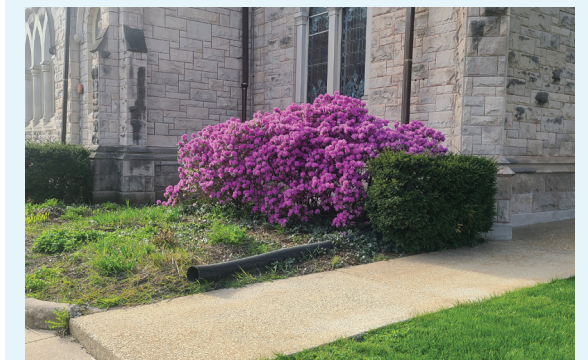
With that encouragement from the letter to the Galatians, our Governing Council retreat will focus on what it looks like to belong to one another as Second Congregational / First Presbyterian Church. Let's spend some time being grateful for one another and the time we get to spend being disciples of Christ on this earth together.

Peace to you,
Rebecca

This is adapted from Rebecca's Mother's Day sermon, "Belonging," Galatians chapters 1 and 2.



Our parking lot pop-up event was a success!



Blooming signs of Spring around the church.



NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

"THIS IS NOT A CONFLICT; IT IS A CRIME."



May 2, Eastern Easter Sunday, was also a day on which the eviction of several Palestinian families living in the Shaikh Jarrah neighborhood, near Jerusalem's Old City, was anticipated. The Israeli Supreme Court delayed its final decision on those evictions for a week and has since put off its decision until next month.

In the meantime, the Islamic month of fasting, Ramadan, has ended and the feast holiday should have begun, but clashes between peaceful protesters supporting the families and Israeli police in Jerusalem over the evictions rapidly spun into an all-out Israeli military assault on Gaza and its people. At this writing, more than 200 Palestinians – approximately half of whom are women and children – have been killed in Gaza by Israeli airstrikes, and in excess of 1,570 Palestinians are known to be wounded. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been displaced from their homes in Gaza. Rockets from Gaza have resulted in twelve Israeli deaths. **Read more: www.ucc.org**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

STATED CLERK REFLECTS ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TULSA RACE MASSACRE



It's been called the single worst incident of racial violence in American history and it occurred 100 years ago this weekend. Between May 31–June 1, 1921, mobs of white residents attacked Black residents and businesses in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma, leaving as

many as 35 square blocks of destruction. Depending on the source, as many as 800 people were injured. Approximately 39 people were confirmed killed, however larger estimates have been reported over the years. The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), looks back on that tragic Memorial Day weekend and provides perspective to present-day race struggles. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**

YOUTH UPDATE

Rachel Huffman, Children and Family Coordinator

The pandemic has been a real game changer in so many aspects of our daily lives. We are finally seeing a return to “normal,” though it is a confusing time. There is still a lot of conflicting information regarding what is safe, what isn’t safe, what is required or not required, and what we should be doing to get back to living life physically present with others again. I am so grateful for all the opportunities that we have to worship in person, whether outdoors or in. Making sure our youth are safe and protected is my top priority as we ease back into in person services. Certainly, if any of you have ever met a child, you know that social distancing isn’t their strongest skill!

I am happy to report that our kids are doing a good job of being mindful and I am making efforts to ensure that they are as safe while they are physically together as possible. We are gathering in the gymnasium as of right now (though this has led to some disappointment in that I won’t let them play foosball or pool!) but are making plans to transition back into classroom settings similar to what the children are used to at their regular schooling. We are also very fortunate to have a few children that are old enough to get their vaccines and I think it’s the first time in my lifetime that I have ever met kids so excited to get a shot!

It is such a blessing beyond measure that only a year after the initial lock down we are now freely able to receive a vaccine to help protect us. Of course, there is still a long way to go until we can feel completely safe again, but we are planning exciting opportunities for the youth of the church to serve and to join in fellowship. I am still offering virtual Sunday School opportunities and hope to integrate virtual students into the physical Sunday School classroom the way schools have been doing so for the last year as well. I want to ensure that every parent and every child feels comfortable coming back to worship together as a church family.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” -Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)



WELCOME! MATT DEWIS, VIDEO PRODUCER

This month we introduced Matt Dewis as our new video producer. Yea for Matt! We have been asking around for anyone with video knowledge or a desire to learn and in walked Matt, fiancé of our children’s ministry coordinator Rachel Huffman. Matt has a degree in video and a desire to serve the church! Remember when you could hear the 10:00 Virtual Easter Worship? That is only because Matt saved the day. Welcome, Matt! We are grateful for your knowledge, skills and willingness to serve.

About Matt...

Matt grew up in Elgin, IL and now lives with his fiancé Rachel in Rockford. He obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Digital Film Production from The Illinois Institute of Art in Schaumburg. His work in film has included works that have ran in independent film festivals, promotional videos for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, and the occasional very small contribution to blockbusters filmed in Chicago. While he currently works for JP Morgan Chase, Matt remains a lifelong film enthusiast with a particular love of classic cinema. Matt is an amateur foodie always ready for an adventure. He loves grilling and BBQ, learning from the masters all over the country.



The Newgren girls help the Lindblade boys light the candles for worship on Sunday.



ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING: PAUL’S HYMN STORIES #9

By Paul Laprade, Director of Music

Readers of this series will recall that ‘hymns’ have historically been considered metrically constructed prayers, texts which were usually prayerfully and individually created without any specific melody in mind. In the case of so many songs we sing from our hymnals, various melodies were grafted onto pre-existing hymns. The best melodies, or sometimes merely those who were favored by serendipity, later became associated with specific hymns to become the versions we have known. Some hymns have extremely rich histories, as does All Creatures of Our God and King (#15 in our hymnal).

This hymn is known as the ‘Canticle of the Sun’, and its origin is the pen of Francis of Assisi. Written during the summer of 1225, with later adjustments, the original manuscript appears in the Umbrian dialect of Italian. At the time, prayers in the Christian church were traditionally written in Latin; Francis’ adherence to a weltanschauung in which all things should bow to simplicity in the eyes of God led him to write it in the vernacular.

The melody now associated with this hymn comes from the pen of an anonymous composer (perhaps Matthaus Greiter), and appears first in a German Psalter from 1525 (three centuries later!). From that psalter, it found its way to Calvin’s Strasbourg Psalter of 1539, the Complete Psalter of 1562, and then finally to a Catholic Psalter from 1623. Interestingly, the tune was then called, “Lass tuns erfreuen herzlich sehr”, or, ‘Let us rejoice very heartily’—an Easter hymn. It appears in various hymnals in the Reformation, sometimes used for Psalm 119, Psalm 68, and even Psalm 146. Its first appearance in English is in the Anglo-Genevan psalter of 1560, in which it acquired a new name, “I’ll Praise My Maker” (Psalm 146). This text is associated with this tune in #806 of our hymnals. In this setting, buried to some extent in our hymnal, it is a wonderful choice for any Easter season liturgy.

The harmonization of this melody by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams appeared with a translation of Francis of Assisi’s translated text, and thereby solidified our association of Francis’ canticle with this song. The repeating, joyful reiterations of ‘Alleluia’ make this hymn a favorite of the post-Easter musical calendar.

MODERATOR’S REFLECTIONS

As your new moderator, let me take a moment to introduce myself. I’m Katy Paterson and have attended our church my entire life. My son and daughter-in-law live in town, and my daughter lives in Colorado. I also have a grandson and a granddaughter. I retired a few years ago from a career as a school librarian. I enjoy reading, playing cards, traveling, and family activities.

One of my goals as moderator is to attend at least one meeting of each ministry team. Thank you to all of you who agreed to serve on teams. Another goal is to meet our church members, especially the ones I don’t know. I’ll be in the parking lot after church every Sunday, except on the Sundays I drive the church bus, to chat with you and hear about joys, problems, concerns, etc. I’ll also be at Serious Soup every Monday from 9:00 to 1:00. If you’ve never seen our soup kitchen in operation, stop by. We’ll even feed you. Feel free also to call or email me.

As we seem to be emerging from our pandemic, let me congratulate you on a job well done. You’ve followed the rules. Our staff and volunteers have done an amazing job of bringing church into our living rooms. We’ve learned to have virtual meetings through Zoom.

Finally I sincerely appreciate your cards, flowers, well wishes and especially prayers as I’ve dealt with health issues this year. You are an amazing congregation and staff.

Hugs and prayers,
Katy Paterson

GOVERNING COUNCIL UPDATE

- » During our April meeting ministry teams shared their joys and accomplishments from the past year.
- » Trustees shared the many improvements that have been made to our building. They also approved building use for several activities.
- » Deacons held a Human Library (Virtually), and delivered treats. They also held Happy Hours, Coffee hours, and developed a call list when COVID started to keep in touch with people.
- » Music reported on repairs to the piano and the organ. We all appreciated the work Paul, Valerie, Joyce Zartman and others did to make memorable music during COVID.
- » Deaconesses (Hospitality) restarted Serious Soup in August with the help of many volunteers.
- » Fellowship made pumpkin bars.
- » Membership helped with prayer stations and thanked Mary Spindler.
- » Reverend Rebecca said the Tuesday Bible study has been wonderful.
- » Adult Ed has had a great year thanks to Andy Newgren and others.
- » Family Christian Ed has worked to keep kids and families engaged with a variety of social media, virtual hangouts, and in person activities.
- » Missions kept in touch with our community all year including through food service, food truck, and soup kitchen.
- » Ann Stites was thanked for her fantastic services as moderator.
- » Governing Council retreat will be Friday, June 11th and Saturday, June 12th.

Blessings,
Katy Paterson

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE HAITI PROJECT AT SECONDFIRST CHURCH?

By Roger Greenlaw

After three years of providing tools and seeds to over 1100 families, James and Odette now tell us stories of how we are creating a rising level of food security for a growing number of families. There are three growing seasons in Saut-d'Eau and they plant beans, corn, rice, squash, avocados, bananas, and more. James owns five acres of land that is naturally irrigated by run off from Saut-d'Eau's famous waterfall. This land provides many people with garden plots, in exchange for a portion of their crops given back to James, which he donates to a local food bank. Many other families have their own land that they can now plant with their new tools and seeds. So...what is most needed now to increase food security?? A GRAIN MILL FOR GRINDING RICE AND CORN into rice flour and cornmeal!

A GRAIN MILL

For years families have had to travel an hour to a grain mill and pay to have their corn and rice ground into cornmeal and rice flour. Now that mill has closed during the pandemic. So, the next project relative to tools, seeds and gardening is to buy a Grain Mill for Saut-d'Eau as a community Co-op. This not for profit Mill will be close to the families, where they can grind their corn and rice for a fee, which will support the operation of the mill and maintenance of the machine. The mill can be used by surrounding communities as well, which will help further support the Co-op. James recently installed power lines to his neighborhood property which will eventually support a community room, a school... but first the mill.

SPRING PROJECT 2021

Our Haiti Project started 3 years ago as a demonstration project in DVT, and is now a regular project of our Missions Ministry Team. This Spring, we would like to raise money for the milling machine which is available for purchase in Haiti for about \$10,000. We hope to raise \$2,500 toward the Mill.

If you would like to donate toward our purchase of a Grain Milling Machine to support food security for the families of Saut-d'Eau Haiti, please send your check to the Church Office with *Haiti Project* in the memo line.

For questions, or to join the Haiti Interest Group at SecondFirst Church, or to join the POUKY board of directors, please contact: Roger & Carolyn Greenlaw Cell: 815-262-1776, 815-978-0723
James Casimir & Odette Massenat Cell: 815-319-0741, 815-516-9034

James' and Odette's' 501c3 (NFP) is POUKY, short for (Pou Kinam Yo) which translates from Creole as "For My People". Current members of POUKY's Board of Directors are now all members of SecondFirst Church. President: Roger Greenlaw, Director of Operations: James Casimir, Secretary and Attorney of Record: Robert Canfield, Asst. Secretary: Rosey Massenat, Treasurer: John DeWaters, Member: Philip Blair, Member: Richard Larson.



(Top row - left to right) 1. Boy watching men planting rice crop; 2. Rice near ready to harvest; 3. Corn crop ready for harvest; 4. Man beating rice grains from stalks; (Bottom row - left to right) 5. Woman bagging rice grains from stalks; 6. Corn crop ready for shelling and milling into cornmeal; 7. Man grinding corn into cornmeal in a grain milling machine; 8. Freshly ground cornmeal.

FROM THE ORGAN BENCH: VALERIE BLAIR

This past week the organ repairs, done with the generosity of the Presbyterian Endowment, were completed. There were three areas of work that were done: voicing, replacing leather burrs, and repairing the harp and celesta unit.

Voicing:

Voicing the organ means smoothing out inconsistencies, notes that are louder or softer than the notes around them. So there won't be a really big difference in the sound of the organ in regards to timbre (color) or brightness, but I think we will notice it being just better, especially in the choir division; those pipes are on the far right in the loft, when facing the cross. That part will sound a little louder and clearer.

There were several dead notes I have been working around for a while now, both in the choir and great divisions (divisions correspond to manuals on the console), which have been fixed.

Replacing leather burrs with plastic ones:

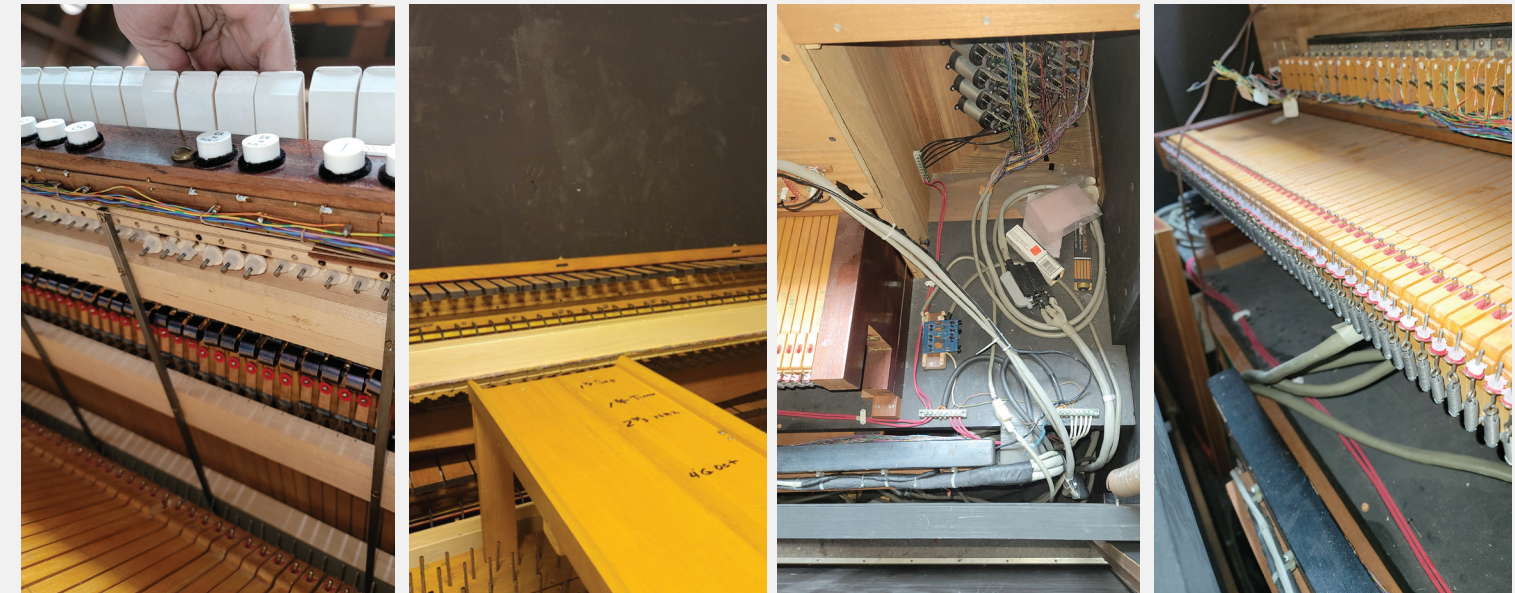
The keys on the manuals have been different heights sometimes, and replacing the leather burrs with the plastic ones, which will never need replacing, resolved that issue.

Some of the issues with the organ are from past water damage, and they have worked on those, and removed a tarp that was there to funnel water away from pipes. I believe the roof repairs done resolved that issue. Additionally, some gaskets used by previous organ repair companies did not hold up, and so were replaced with better materials, namely leather.

Repairing the harp and celesta unit:

The harp and celesta unit were removed and repaired at the shop in Antioch, IL, after having been blocked off for several years, likely because it had too many problems to even be used. So, there are two new sounds available, which you will hear in the coming weeks. Fabry tells me the pneumatics will take some time to settle in, and may require more adjustments, which Fabry will do when they come to tune the organ.

So, a big thank you to the people who agreed to funding these repairs from the Presbyterian Endowment Fund. We have a wonderful instrument here, as many organists around town tell me, and it is wonderful to maintain and improve it, so that future congregations will continue to enjoy the many sounds and colors of the pipe organ.



RVC TECH BUS IN OUR PARKING LOT

Rock Valley College has a new initiative to bring job training to where people live... on a bus! The RVC Tech Bus has a sole purpose to alter life paths by bringing cutting edge technology to youth in the Rockford Region. A Mobile App Development course is being held in our parking lot on Saturdays from May 22 - August 7. If you know of anyone interested in learning about mobile apps, have them contact RVC, or visit www.rockvalleycollege.edu.



THE DREAM TEAM IS DEEP

As I reflect on the last year, we have so many things to be grateful for. I am so impressed with our worship staff and volunteers, who pivoted and maneuvered so many times.

In addition to being able to pull off worship with only four people in the sanctuary (so weird!), our Dream Team roster is deep. We will have to replay the many-faces of Paul Laprade musical pieces sometimes just to reminisce. Seriously, that is some talent to be able to play all of those parts and then piece them together. Thank you, Paul!

Wes Hegge deserves a huge shout out as well. We pulled on Wes' sound knowledge repeatedly as we shifted how we streamed worship. And did you know (you don't) that it takes 45 minutes just to run the sound cords for outdoor worship!? Many thanks to you, Wes!

And our new additions of Rachel Huffman and Matt Dewis are meaningful and helpful. Plus, Debbie doing the bulletins and Jeff and Maria keep the building clean and whole... the worship team is strong!

— Rev Rebecca



EASING OF COVID RESTRICTIONS... AND ALWAYS VIRTUAL

Our Covid Committee says we passed the test of worshipping safely in the sanctuary, so we will continue to do so. We will gather outside for those who prefer the fresh air on the Second Sunday of every month. In order to protect those who are not yet vaccinated (our children!) and anyone who is immunocompromised, we will continue to mask and distance in worship. Thank you for sitting where you are told and waiting to be ushered out.

Our "Not Coffee" Hour will be in the parking lot after worship for the foreseeable future. We will always have our worship service online and love the community that is growing up around that virtual space.

Questions? Suggestions?

The Covid Committee (Jay Baker, Phil Davidson, Jim Delmore, Roger Greenlaw, Katy Paterson, Ann Stites, Pastor Becky and Rev. Rebecca) would love to hear from you. Many thanks to the committee for their wisdom, guidance and decisions this year!



VIRTUAL HAPPY AND COFFEE HOURS

Thank you for attending! Deacons are no longer hosting Zoom happy hours or coffee hours. The original purpose was to allow members to actually see one another and stay in touch when we were unable to meet in person. Since we can do that more easily now, we feel it is no longer necessary. Thank you to all of you who participated and shared in fellowship with us. We look forward to seeing you some Sunday morning.

SERIOUS SOUP UPDATE

We are back serving soup at Serious Soup! It is the most requested part of the meal for our guests. There are many ways to help out this successful ministry. We need soup makers. Favorite soups are old fashion comfort soups like chicken noodle or any cream soups. Nothing fancy. We are also in need of Saltine Crackers. We have a box in the Narthex labeled crackers so you can drop without contact. Contact: Arlene Noel or Katy Paterson if you can make a big pot of soup.



TOWER HILL HERE WE COME!

July, 8-11 Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center

Please join us as we are "Camping Out" at Tower Hill, our very own UCC camp. It is so much fun and they have so much to offer! It is in Sawyer, Michigan. Questions? Contact: Doug Phillips.

WELCOME BACK PARK DISTRICT!

The Rockford Park District Therapeutic Recreation Program will be with us again this summer. The program will run from June 14-August 6. The Park District loves our location and easy handicapped entrance and accessibilities.

JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN

We had a successful lunch on May 2, once again preparing To Go lunches. A crack team of Darlene Riddle, Eleanor Babel, Holly Beeman and John Maynard worked efficiently and often to the beat of a drumming youth camp! Our next date is June 12 and we hope you can join us! Marge Maynard

Upcoming Opportunity: Saturday, June 12, 10:00 am

We will be preparing and packaging and passing out lunches at the Jubilee Center But there's more we will also be making bag lunches for Habitat for Humanity workers! The Mission Team has traditionally provided a lunch for the workers once a year and we timed it to get a two-fer effort this year. We expect to gather at 10:00 am at the Jubilee Center. If you can help, Contact: Jean Herro or Marge Maynard. Thanks!

GRADUATION

Sunday, June 13

If you are graduating from High School, College, Seminary, technical programs, etc., let us know! Please send a brief bio of where you have graduated from and your future plans to Debbie. Our Graduates will be celebrated in Worship.

SAVE THE DATES

Sunday, June 13: Outdoor Worship, Leader Blessing and Graduation Celebration

July 11-18: UCC General Synod

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



ALICE UPHOUSE

Member Alice Uphouse received the Chairman's Service Excellence award from Winnebago County Chairman Joe Chiarelli for her years of "dedicated professionalism, integrity, and sustained commitment to excellence", including decades of service on the crime commission. Congratulations, Alice!



Jacob Paterson unpinning his dad's badge at David's retirement ceremony. Photo Credit: Rockford Police Department

DAVID PATERSON

Congratulations to David Paterson, who recently retired after 30 years with the Rockford Police Department and whom we honored in worship. David spent most of this work as a detective investigating violent crimes, a job most of us don't want to hear about. In a time when law enforcement officers have been in the hotseat, David is one to stand tall and do his work with justice and honor. Thank you, David! Congratulations on your retirement!