

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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JULY 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

Hello Church,

At our recent governing council retreat we focused on three words: Belong. Grow. Serve. I hope my sermon on June 13 and this newsletter is not the last time you hear those words. In fact, we are wanting to know how you Belong. Grow. and Serve. with SecondFirst Church.

Belong... the way you feel connected, loved and cared for by the church. This is a connection and grounding within yourself, with God and with one another. And it is different for everyone. Some feel connected just by attending worship. Some feel loved because people know their name. Others only feel like they belong if their needs are being attended to. We are all different and belong in different ways, but it is important that the church be available and respond in each of those ways.

Grow... we grow in love and life and joy because we have gathered as church. We grow in our relationships with God and with one another. If we are not growing in our faith, we are only a social service agency or a great Kiwanis club. We are called to be children of God and followers of Jesus growing in the way of Christ.

Serve... as a church we don't exist solely for ourselves. We can't merely belong and grow. God calls us out of the temptation to be self-centered (even family-centered) and into our neighborhoods, places of work, Rockford and beyond to seek Jesus and do God's work.

At our leadership retreat, we prayed and discerned that we have done a lot of service in the last few years, as was our goal. Now we want to shift (a bit...don't worry, we won't abandon our Christ-centered service) to focus on belonging. We enjoyed sharing stories of what makes us feel like we belong and the people and experiences that lead us to feel at home at Second Congregational / First Presbyterian Church. We hope soon to ask you where you feel like you belong and where you don't.

What a great church we get to be a part of. As the great church reformers of the 16th century constantly remind us: we are reformed and always reforming. I'm grateful we get to do church together.

Peace to you,
Rebecca



OUTDOOR TEAMWORK

Many thanks to those who volunteered to beautify the church grounds, and to Ron Schaad for guiding the way. The church grounds look great!

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SAVE THE DATE FOR THE UCC GENERAL SYNOD: JULY 11-18 (ATTEND VIRTUALLY!)



Hello Church,
Join me for the UCC General Synod, July 11-18! No travel necessary. There are some silver linings of Covid and being able to attend the UCC national gathering digitally is an amazing opportunity.

This is a great time to see what the church is up to, to be challenged and encouraged and reconnect in your faith. There are many opportunities to worship, learn and grow. If you are interested, please let Debbie in the office know so that we can gather those of us from SecondFirst to share experiences.

See you "there"!
Rebecca

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) PALESTINIAN REFUGEES CALL ON PRESBYTERIANS TO SUPPORT THEM



United States Southern Border, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s immigration webinar series turned its attention this week to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, and the broader Middle East.

The conversation was hosted by Catherine Gordon of the

PC(USA) Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C. and Bethlehem-based Douglas Dicks of Presbyterian World Mission. It detailed the plight of Palestinian refugees from people who know the situation intimately and continue to hope for a political solution, and it concluded with calls to action for Presbyterians.

Gordon opened with the fact that 750,000 Palestinians were displaced by the 1948 war that led to the founding of Israel, and none of them were ever able to return home. There are now 7 million Palestinian refugees around the world. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**

MODERATOR'S REFLECTIONS

I'd like to extend a special welcome this month to our new members. I was privileged to attend the new member classes and get to know these people a little better. They'll be great additions to our church membership. I'd also like to congratulate our graduates. We're very proud of all of you.

Nearly a year and a half of COVID has changed all of our lives. Most of us learned to watch our Sunday church services on Facebook Live. We appreciate those people who had the technical knowledge and took the time to make it all happen. As we have returned to being able to attend church in person, Facebook Live continues to fill a need for many people who cannot or would prefer not to attend church in person. Many of us have also learned to attend meetings on Zoom. Many of us have also found time for hobbies and chores while in quarantine. Personally I have cleaned and reorganized every cupboard and closet in my house. I've also found more time to indulge in my favorite hobby – reading.

In the past few months we've missed out on so many things such as rites and celebrations, spending time with family,

and all kinds of social activities. We know it has had a major impact on those of you working. Some of you have adjusted to working from home. Others have lost their jobs or had hours cut. We recognize as heroes those of you who have continued to work with the public.

As a member of the COVID committee at church, we take our job as committee members seriously. We spend time discussing important decisions such as having worship outdoors, having worship indoors, and what each of these services will look like. After an absence of several months, we recently held our first indoor coffee hour/celebration for our graduates. We also held our first funeral reception in our dining room. We appreciate the preparations that the staff and members made to make these things happen. We know that social activities and being able to see each other in person are an important part of church. We hope to have more in person meetings, classes, and social events in the near future.

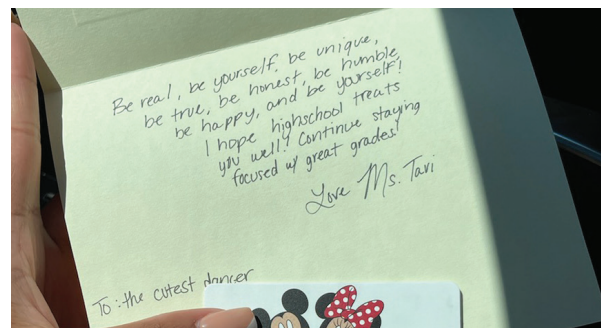
Hopefully,
Katy Paterson

KFACT UPDATE

This last year has been crazy and a year of great uncertainty for sure! KFACT is excited to share that despite the pandemic 100% of our girls graduated from high school this year! We are very proud of our college graduates who completed their 4-year degree with excellent grades! We have two mentees who graduated from Rust College with Biology majors, NIU Early Childhood Education Major and a graduate from Phoenix University with a Secondary Education Major.

KFACT was nominated by Jim and Pam Keeling for the Golden Apple Foundation, and KFACT was recognized on June 14th for all the accomplishments for Rockford students!

Save the Date: KFACT's annual Community Trunk Party fundraiser event will be August 7, 2021. We are looking for support from the community to fill a trunk with dorm room essentials during the month of July. If you, your family and friends or perhaps your workplace would be interested in supporting a KFACT graduate please contact Tara Dickson at KFACT by June 30th!



THE HYMNS OF TAIZÉ/JESUS REMEMBER ME (227): PAUL'S HYMN STORIES #10

By Paul Laprade, Director of Music

Our church often sings "Jesus Remember Me" during Lenten services. This hymn, along with many others, comes from the pen of Jacques Berthier (1923-1994), one of the early and most prominent composers of music for the Taizé community. Berthier is also among the most represented of composers in our hymnal.

Music from Taizé is intended for communal worship. It is written with modest vocal ranges, often a sixth or less, so that nearly every singer can perform it with ease. This design is sensible: when few vocal challenges exist, it is easier for people to focus on the intent of the song. Many of these songs are also written in very simple four-part harmony and are often given simple flute/violin parts that can be played by an amateur. The texts, simple and succinct, often allow quick memorization of these works. As a result, many chants from the Taizé community are repetitive, mantra-like, and allow for a nearly hypnotic Spirit-filled prayer to take over. The experience is deeply affecting and beautiful when given a chance to breathe and develop. These repetitive versions of Taizé music are called ostinato hymns.

Canons (technically, rounds) are also an important part of Taizé musical worship. Sung as a single line, overlapping as reintroduced by additional groups of people, the canons in this style of music are repetitive in a manner that creates an overwhelming feeling of flowing. Canons are often used to depict joy in the music of Taizé and are often accompanied by guitar. Again, the melodies are simple, memorable, and focused textually.

More experienced and versatile singers have a home in this music as well. Occasionally, a simple refrain becomes an ostinato (repeated). The community is encouraged to sing the ostinato with words at first, then, when a soloist enters with verses, the ostinato becomes quieter or is transformed into a hum. The continuous nature of congregational singing in a Taizé service is rather unique and beautiful, for it encompasses the entire work, even when soloists are introduced. Clearly, this music was intended for full musical involvement of a community in singing, and the traditional notion of 'performance' disappears beautifully in such an environment. In the end, the focus is on corporeal worship in a manner that is distinct and moving.

Taizé music was first printed in small booklets in the 1970's, in French, German, and Latin. It first appeared in American versions in translations from GIA Press of Chicago in the mid 1980's. The original services encouraged singing; the community is focused on youth (ages 17-30) for the purpose of creating pilgrims who would spread the message of peace to the entire world. In this manner, the music spread and has been adopted by nearly every major Christian denomination. I hope that you can attend a Taizé service in the future or observe one of the many beautiful video recordings found online.

GOVERNING COUNCIL UPDATE

Reverend Rebecca reviewed our new members. Pastor Becky is working on a partnership with the City of Rockford to help prepare the apartments the City secures for homeless people. Our church will sponsor a person and help them furnish their new home.

We are trying out several changes to our ministry teams. Fellowship has joined the Deacons Ministry Team. Music is now the Worship, Music, and Arts Ministry Team. Deaconesses are now the Hospitality Ministry Team. New chairpersons for teams were welcomed.

Trustees have many ongoing projects to improve and/or repair things around our church. If you see a problem please fill out a form that Debbie has in the office.

An AV improvement proposal was sent to the Governing Council by Trustees. After a lengthy discussion a fundraising team was put together to decide on how to pay for new AV equipment and installation.

We were fortunate to have an inspiring Governing Council Retreat on June 11th and June 12th. Thank you to Rebecca, Becky, and Bob Canfield for their presentations. We were given food for thought and a chance to get to know each other better.

Blessings,
Katy Paterson



FROM THE TRUSTEE MINISTRY TEAM

Thanks to the landscaping committee flowers have been planted and mulch has been put down, the Church Street Entrance Planter is being improved also.

The South entrance will be receiving new doors in the near future. The new doors will provide improved security and be weatherized. Plans are underway to replace the skylight windows in the Church Street entrance along with the repair of the water drain, after the work is done the inside wall will be repaired. Two of the large windows in Gordon Chapel have been replaced the third window will be replaced soon. Repair or replacement of the Church Street entrance steps is being evaluated. We are fortunate to have the Foundation that has paid to have this work done. Without the Foundation many projects could not be done.

With a church this size and age there are always things to repair and replace. If you see something that needs attention, please take the time to notify the office so that the concern can be logged and followed up on. Building and Grounds Concern forms can be found in the back of the sanctuary and in the office.

HAITI PROJECT UPDATE

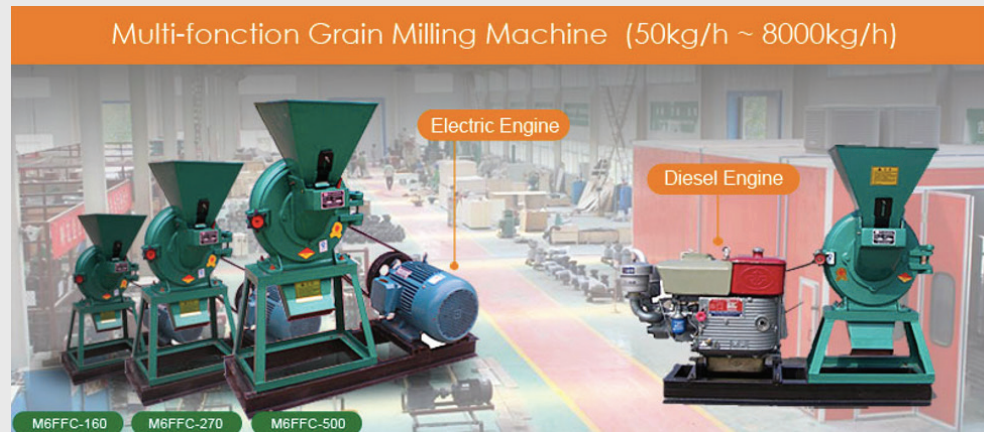
By Roger Greenlaw

Haiti Project Update: The success of our three annual fund drives (2018-2019-2020) for Tools & Seeds for Saut-d'Eau, Haiti has increased the level of food security for hundreds of families. This Spring we are focused on building a (Co-op) Grain Mill for Saut-d'Eau, so that people can grind their corn and rice into cornmeal and rice flour, critical for their family meals. The only mill in the region was over an hour away, but it closed during the pandemic. This new Mill will greatly increase local food security and raise just enough money from users to maintain the equipment and staff the Mill as a Coop for the people. James has already secured the necessary electrical service to the neighborhood to run the Milling Machine.

The Milling Machine will cost \$10,000. Our goal is to raise \$2500 toward funding the mill during our 2021 Spring fund drive for Food Security (Tools & Seeds) for Saut-d'Eau. So far, we have received \$1900. We will reach our goal...

The Mill project will also require the building of a large Shed or open-air building to house the Mill and that will cost about \$18,000. 'Pouky' is applying for a Grant from another donor source in our city to build the Shed...stay tuned for more information on that.

If you have any questions, or would like to join the Haiti Interest Group at SecondFirst Church, please contact: Roger & Carolyn Greenlaw (rgreen97@aol.com, csgreen52@aol.com) James & Odette Casimir (casimir0401@gmail.com)



We are seeking donations of bottled water and soup.

SERIOUS SOUP UPDATE: DONATE SOUP AND BOTTLED WATER

Many are attending our Serious Soup! 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 bottled water. We have a box in the Narthex so you can drop off water without contact. Contact: Arlene Noel or Katy Paterson if you can make a big pot of soup or donate some bottled water.



The garden beds received a fun and colorful makeover!



The mural is being repaired! Two panels broke off in the frigid winds this past winter. The repairs will ensure that the panels stay in place. Many thanks to Jim Delmore and artist Tia Richardson for restoring it. "After" pictures coming soon.



JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT'S LOVE ROCKFORD EVENT: DONATIONS NEEDED

Saturday, September 25

We are starting to collect clothes now. All clean, gently used clothing is welcome, but winter clothing will be especially appreciated. We do not want shoes, purses, accessories or household goods. Please drop bags off at church in bags clearly marked "Love Rockford". If you have any questions, or would like to assist in sorting the clothes, please contact Darlene Riddle at driddle88@gmail.com or 815-988-3573.

JOIN THE CARILLONS

The Carillons are excited to begin bell rehearsals! We will meet for an hour at 9:30 am, the fourth Thursday morning of every month during the summer, and then every Thursday morning, beginning in September. New members are always welcome. We hope we will be able to present music at a service late in September. If you are interested in joining Carillons, Contact: Director, Joyce Zartman



JOIN IN THE FUN, RINGING THE BELLS!

After laying silent for more than a year, our bells will soon be ringing again! Joyce will begin rehearsing her Carillons in late June and my groups (Martin Ringers and Bellcantos) will resume in September. Sarah's precious Peanuts will also start up in the fall. We'd love to have you join us! This will be a rebuilding year, as we feel our way back, so don't be shy! Come and give it a try! No previous bell-ringing experience necessary. You don't even need to read music. Fun and fellowship guaranteed! Contact: Julie Cook Ramirez

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

Tuesdays at 7:00 am in the Dining Room

The cost is still \$1.00. Masks required to enter; social distancing is requested (like at a restaurant). We hope to reunite with all former attendees and are looking for others to join for fellowship, breakfast, and prayer. Contact: Steve Showers



THANK YOU DEAR "FLOWER FRIENDS"

Many thanks to Alice Uphouse, Katy Paterson, Darlene Riddle, Julie Elliot and Mary Young who have provided fresh floral arrangements for the Communion Table during Springtime. Your flowers have added natural beauty and uplifting color to our service.

Our Flower Calendar is filling up quickly since we reinstated it last month, but there is still one Sunday available: October 31.

You can put an arrangement together from your garden, farmers market, local nursery or just call your favorite florist. Please let Debbie in the office know what date you want reserved.

Just a reminder that Communion is served on the first Sunday of the month. On that day we will place a flower stand on the Chancel.



SCHOLARSHIP AND LOANS AVAILABLE

If you are a post high school graduate, planning on furthering your education by attending college, vocational school, or graduate school this coming academic year (2021-22) SecondFirst Member, you are eligible to inquire about the First Presbyterian Scholarship Fund or the Weingartner Student Loan Fund. For additional information: Presbyterian Members, email Joyce Pogue by Monday, July 19. United Church of Christ Members, email Jeff Jacobs, or contact the office.

We Celebrate our Graduates, Congratulations!

Allison Courtney Ray Ackerman graduated on Friday, May 14 from Drake Law School in Des Moines, IA earning her JD (juris doctor) degree. She earned her undergraduate degree from Augustana College in Rock Island, IL and graduated from Keith Country Day High School in Rockford. Allison has accepted a position at Nidey Erdahl Meier & Araguás, PLC in downtown Cedar Rapids, IA and will be studying for the bar exam. She is the daughter of members Mark and Carol Ackerman, and granddaughter of Larry and Marsha Ackerman.

Natasha Ferrero graduated in May from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a B.S. in Recreation, Sports and Tourism. She was a James Scholar and graduated with Honors. She has been employed with American Campus Communities in Champaign since February of 2020 and accepted a full-time position as a Leasing Coordinator for the Champaign market in February of 2021.

Mason Ferrero graduated in May from Highland Park High School. He will continue living at home and begin vocational training through North Suburban Special Education District this summer.

Justin Hallberg graduated from Rockford University with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology/Sports Management, with a Minor in Business Administration. He graduated Summa Cum Laude. Justin is looking at getting his Masters at Rockford University to continue his education. He is the Son of Sarah L. Hallberg, and the grandson of Alice Fry Uphouse.

Nathaniel Laprade is a graduate from the Gifted Program at Auburn High School. He will attend Lawrence University (Appleton, WI) where he will pursue studies in Governmental Policy. Nathaniel is the eldest son of Paul Laprade and Kirsten Spurlock.

Mary Makulec graduated in April 2021 with a Master of Social Work degree from George Williams College of Aurora University. She is employed at the Rockford Family Peace Center as a Crisis Intake Navigator serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking.

Katie Mitchell graduated and received her BA, all while working full time! She now has a degree in Applied Management and is looking for new positions in Human Resources and Company Management.

Gannon Novak has graduated from Illinois State University with a major in Graphic Arts and a minor in Psychology. He will go on to attain a Master's Degree at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Gannon is the grandson of Janet Novak.

Sebastian Picchioni graduated May 29, 2021, from Hononegah Community High School, Rockton, IL. He will be attending Rock Valley College in late August and work towards a 4 year degree in Music Production. After two years at Rock Valley, he plans to transfer to a 4-year college to complete his degree. In addition to Music Production, Sebastian is also interested in majors of Chemistry, Biology, and Business. Currently, he works at the Red Barn Golf Course in Rockton. Sebastian is the son of Andy Picchioni, and grandson of Zan and Dave Picchioni.

Nate Youman graduated from Stillman Valley High School as valedictorian. Nate was selected for the IHSA All-State Academic Team, qualified as National Merit Scholarship Commended, earned the College Board National Rural and Small Town Commended Scholar and AP Scholar, and was involved in over a dozen clubs, activities, and advisory committees. During the last four years, his family has enjoyed seeing Nate when he stops by at home to sleep, eat, and get clean clothes. Nate will be attending the University of Chicago in the fall and plans to major in public policy. This summer Nate is working at Stillman Valley Bank and shoveling out his bedroom at home. Nate is the son of Ben and Kristi Youman and the brother of Nick and Kate Youman.



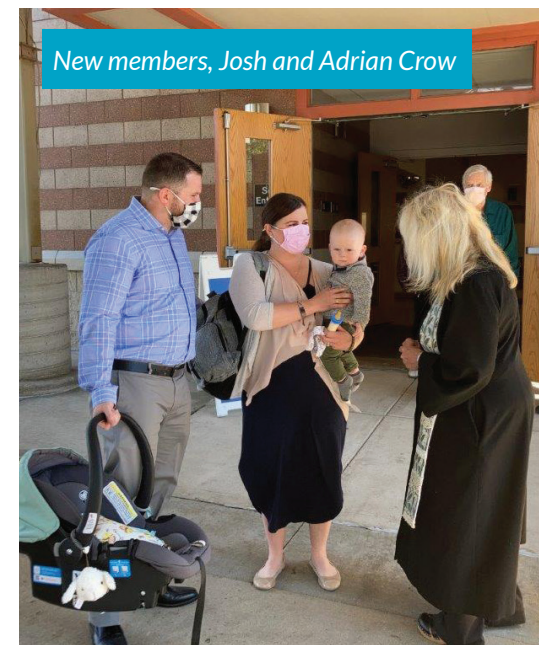
Serious Soup continues to serve lunch to a steady group of friends who rely on our church for both food and fellowship.



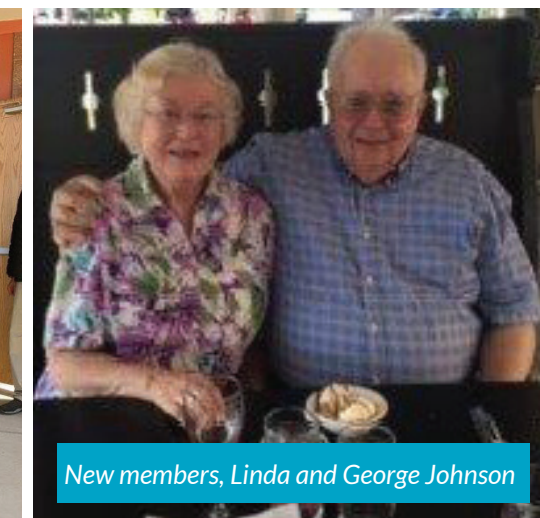
Anneke helps Karla light the candles before worship.



The RVC Tech Bus is reaching neighbors with mobile app training in our parking lot on Saturdays.



New members, Josh and Adrian Crow



New members, Linda and George Johnson



New member, Stephanie Reinecke



New members, Mitzi and Steve Muntz



New members, Rod and Cat Lewis



New member, Bill Barnhart

Welcome New Members!

Bill Barnhart was reared a Methodist and both his brother and wife are ordained UMC ministers. Spirituality was always important for him especially as it relates to his ministry as a physician and teacher. Bill has already jumped in to lead Coffee Classes this year and we are delighted he has joined the church.

Josh and Adrian Crow (with baby Conrad) enjoy outdoor activities. Adrian works as a lawyer and Josh as an engineer when they are not spending time with their large extended family. Adrian was raised in Southern Wisconsin in a UCC church and Josh in rural central Illinois in a Catholic church. We look forward to our time together as church.

Linda and George Johnson have always enjoyed being part of churches and have experience in both the Presbyterian and congregational churches. Linda enjoys giving her musical talents, as she comes to us by way of our bell ministry and looks forward to serving with us downtown. George is a retired math teacher and enjoys reading historical fiction. We are a better church because the Johnson's are joining us.

Rod and Cat Lewis come to us because of Cat's work at SwedishAmerican Hospital in emergency services. She was instrumental in helping us figure out the need for the Rockford Overnight Cafe. Rod is retired from Greenlee Textrom and loves riding his motorcycle. They enjoy their children and grandchildren. They have a history in the Presbyterian Church, and this is in fact the second time they are joining First Pres. We are grateful they are joining us, again!

Mitzi and Steve Muntz learned about SecondFirst by volunteering with Jeremiah Development. Steve and Mitzi were married four years ago and have been on a journey of faith together. They enjoy their rescue cats and dogs, kayaking, cycling, gardening and home renovation projects. They look forward to getting to know SecondFirst and serving downtown with us. What a blessing it is to have the Muntz's in our midst.

Stephanie Reinecke (with her two school-aged children) has friends in our congregation and joined us from the world wide web! Stephanie is a nurse by training and found our worship services on Facebook Live to be grounding during the uncertain Covid times. We look forward to getting to know Stephanie and her family and are grateful they are joining us.