



## Rooted in Love

*They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season.*

Psalm 1:3a



## Stewardship Moment

by Jessica Lindblade

I was asked to speak about a time that the church held its greatest importance for me, and I can pinpoint it to an exact date: June 8, 2012. That was the day this church became part of my life and I had never even stepped foot in this sanctuary, nor did I know a single one of you yet.

To give a little background, I was born, raised, and married in a beautiful Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic Church in Chicago. When I moved to Rockford the commute to Chicago became too much for a Sunday morning and John, a non-Ukrainian, didn't really fit in anyway. We would occasionally visit John's family's Catholic church, but we didn't feel like we belonged there either. Some of the sermons had us raising our eyebrows, and frankly sleeping in on Sunday mornings was pretty great! Then one day, 6 years later, I scrolled by a guest column in the Rockford Register Star written by Dr. Mike Solberg, the former pastor of Second Congregational Church. In his column he was openly supporting Rockford's first PRIDE Fest, and while he did say he was not speaking for his congregation – I was still completely blown away. Was there really a church in Rockford that actually welcomed everyone? A place where everyone belonged? I had to know.

So I Googled Second Congregational Church. “No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey – you are welcome here.” We did a drive-by the next Saturday afternoon and planned to attend just one service...and the rest, as they say, is history...but that would cut this story too short and not give this congregation the credit you all deserve.

We were pretty nervous our first time visiting, but we were flooded with your friendly faces - and pre-covid - you all passed the peace on another level! It was almost overwhelming. Because of your kindness we took a risk, signed that pew-pad, and made ourselves known. That led to coffee with the pastor, becoming members of this church, both of us serving on missions, having twins (we needed all your prayers to be able to be blessed with those two), John serving on Jeremiah Development, CROP walks, a surprise 3rd child, baptisms and bell concerts, Family Christian Ed, and so many new friends we call our church family – all because God showed us her amazing, inclusive love and support through a newspaper column, you, and this church.