

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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FEBRUARY 2022

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



FROM REV. REBECCA WHITE NEWGREN

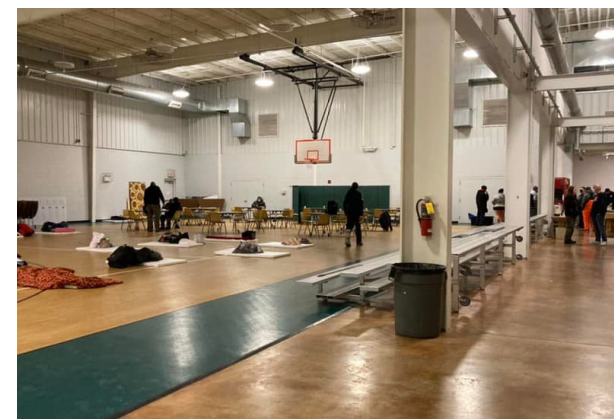
Hello Church!

You are an amazing church! We are an amazing church. Let me say again what I said from the pulpit on Sunday, January 23. In John 3, Nichodemus has us questioning Jesus and wondering what requirements there might be to enter into God's grace. Spoiler alert: God loved you before you loved God. Our individual and collective faith is often witnessed instead of explained. Church, you have faith. From the sermon:

As pastor, I often get outsized credit for the outreach of this church. But it is you and your faith that displays who we are and how people are drawn to God's light here. You are the ones who had the foresight to build a gym in 2004 for the community. You are the ones who for decades gathered coats to keep children warm in the winter. You buy boots and apples for our local elementary school. You have a community garden on this church land to feed your neighbors ... ALL of that was here before I got here and what drew me to you. It is not me, it is not you either. It is all of us collectively in this place where God calls us seeking the kingdom of God together. I can't explain it. I can't quite put my finger on why this church is so special. But I do know one thing, if we only focused on our doubt, if we put a litmus test of belief in place, if we shackled each other with categories and checklists, we would be crippled in fear and unable to act and love in faith.

Thank you, Church, for choosing faith over doubt; for acting in love even before you can explain your beliefs. God calls and you respond. I'm grateful for you all.

Peace to you,
Rev. Rebecca



The Rockford Overnight Café is providing shelter to 37 people on average each night. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in the success of this very important community service.



Pastor Becky and our faithful volunteers checking in guests at the Rockford Overnight Café.



Sometimes before we ask, the items we need show up at the door. Thank you, Holy Spirit, and all who have donated items and money to the café!



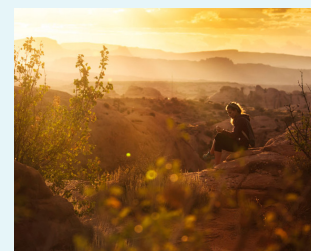
NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: A MOVEMENT AFFIRMING WOMEN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



Approaching the 49th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we reconsider the lens through which we understand reproductive health. As a movement with a womanist foundation, reproductive justice invites us to consider the whole; to pass the mic to those who are being oppressed by intentional lack of access, to center the narratives of those who have been marginalized, and to understand that this conversation includes, but is not limited to, abortion. It is for this reason, and many more, that we refer specifically to Reproductive Justice as opposed to reproductive health and/or reproductive rights. **Read more: www.ucc.org**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) THE POWER OF SOLITUDE: AN ANCIENT PRACTICE REMEDIES BUSY LIVES



The church has scheduled an annual observance of solitude for us called the season of Lent. While we are still reveling in the light of Epiphany, Lent will be upon us before you know it, beginning March 2 this year with the observance of Ash Wednesday.

So how can we start preparing to fully enter this season? What can the beginning of Lent tell us about the benefits of solitude that we might have forgotten after having an unwelcomed season of COVID solitude? The Lenten season began in the late fourth century when Christians were no longer persecuted for their faith. They no longer had to meet in secret. And they no longer had to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit to join the church. In short, most people were Christians in name only. So, a small group resolved to do something about the lax attitude they witnessed. They sold their possessions and gave to the poor. They lived in the wilderness in the style of John the Baptist: eating what the land offered and spending much time in prayer. Above all, they practiced silence, solitude and simplicity. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

As I've mentioned before I grew up attending our church. It was my mother that had been raised as a Congregationalist and brought me and my brother and sister to church. My dad had been raised as a Baptist and only occasionally attended our church when I was growing up. At some point my mother convinced my dad to join our church. Sometime after he was asked to become a deacon. He was honored to become a deacon and took his responsibilities seriously. During his time as a deacon, the deacons and their families were asked to attend the first services of two new churches, Spring Creek and Woodside Congregational churches.

As an adult I felt the deaconess were an elite group that I'd never be invited to join. Coffee hour was an elegant affair with select people pouring coffee each Sunday. Several years ago they asked for volunteers to pour coffee. I volunteered and to my surprise whoever called me about pouring coffee asked if I'd like to become a deaconess. I felt very honored. Our Nominating Team is currently looking for volunteers to fill vacancies on our church ministry teams. I know that my dad and I are not the only people in our congregation that would be honored to serve on a ministry team. Unfortunately we don't know who you are. If you or someone you know is interested in serving on a team please reach out to me or another member of a Nominating Team and let us know. If you're not sure what each team does, we'll be happy to answer your questions.

We've made serving on a team easier than ever. Due to Covid 19 our teams meet via Zoom. A few teams have gone to hybrid meetings with people meeting both in person and via Zoom. Meeting by Zoom eliminates going down to church at night, in the winter, and in the dark. Most teams meet in the early evening. Several teams have changed meeting times or nights to accommodate their members. You can attend a Zoom meeting when you're on vacation, in the car, and wearing whatever you want. Personally I've attended a Zoom meeting from my hospital bed and another one while playing cards. Please consider volunteering to serve on a team. The Nominating Team is made up of Phil Davidson, Darlene Riddle, Diane Pippel, Doug Phillips, Holly Hegge, Jean Herro, Arlene Noel, Ann Stites, and me. Feel free to contact any of us by phone, email, or in person. I am in church every Sunday and would love to talk to you.

As I say in church every Sunday, "It is my honor and privilege to serve our church as Moderator". I sincerely feel that way.

Gratefully,
Katy Paterson

A little bit from Pastor Becky...

As of this writing we are in our third week of the Overnight Café. We have served 85 people who have come through at least one night since January 4, when we opened. That amount is double from the last two years at this time. We average 37 per night. We will cap at 40 due to COVID concerns and protocols. Everyone must wear a mask at all times except when eating, drinking.

With the help of volunteers from our church and community we have provided meals each night. Soups, stews and casseroles work wonderfully. Thank you to all who have donated breakfast, underwear and socks. Thank you to our church volunteers who help check in guests.

We have a wonderful staff. Three are returning and three new staff. Sarge is back. He says this gives him purpose. Jimira ("T") is also back running the kitchenette. Money is tight and we may have to shorten our time of being open. Our biggest cost is staff. We are working on more grants and we are receiving donations from the community.

There are wonderful stories to share. People are very grateful for a warm place to stay. Feel free to call me if you have questions or concerns.

We are blessed to be able to offer this service to those in need.



Pastor Becky trains the staff before the opening of the Rockford Overnight Café.



JANUARY UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES

By Jim Delmore

A break in the weather allowed the changing of the outside parking lot light bulbs. The procedure is not a simple matter; a lift has to be rented. Even though we had a number of bulbs that were out, the ballasts and capacitors were good. The bulbs that are used are Metal Halide which is a High Intensity Discharge bulb. The size of the bulbs that are in our fixtures are becoming harder to find. I am not certain if it is supply chain related or if the industry design is changing, time will tell. The two fixtures on the outside of the chapel facing the parking lot have been converted from Metal Halide to LED. The conversion was done because changing the capacitor and the bulb cost more than the LED bulb. Check out the difference and let me know what you think.

Did you know?

The Trustee Ministry Team which reports to the Governing Council is responsible for the general supervision of the financial and business affairs of the church. All ministry teams, committees, subcommittees, and organized groups of the church holding funds report to the Trustee Ministry Team annually. The following committees are established by and report to the Trustee Ministry Team:

- » Building and Grounds Committee
- » Thrift Shop Subcommittee
- » Fair Trade Subcommittee
- » Finance Committee
 - » Budget Subcommittee
- » Stewardship Subcommittee
- » Memorials Subcommittee
 - » Subcommittees of Memorials
 - » Weingartner Memorial Student Loan Fund Committee
 - » First Presbyterian Church of Rockford, Illinois Scholarship Fund

Checks and balances are needed in any organization. The Audit Ministry Team is responsible for conducting periodic examinations of the financial operational controls and the financial transactions of the church. The Audit Ministry Team reports to the congregation and will provide an annual report to the congregation along with providing any needed financial operational modifications recommendations to the Trustees Ministry Team.

I would like to thank everyone serving on the financial subcommittees.

Thank you notes from the Haskell School children.

Dear members of Second/First Church
THANK YOU for the boots, I love the dis
on the boots, I'm thank ful,
I will play in the snow
make snow now, the boots warm
camp, I love so much for it to snow
I will run in the snow, the
boots are the best, thank you
so much I love them
your friend
son the view
friend about the boots

Dear Second/First Church,
I thank you for the pretty
boots I am thankful
for the boots.
I will definitely be
wearing the pretty boots.
Thank you for the pretty boots
they are really cool. Love
ASSKIA

Dear 1 children thank you
for the boots they help MY
mom and dad they don't
have to buy any boots
I am thankful they don't have
much I like the boots they
help me us and the school we
like them love love love the
boots thank you.

Dear my own mother Thank you
for the boots. I love
my boots so much.
I love the
purple and them all
I love all the people
who donated money
to get us boots. Love
Lain.



FAMILY FUN DAY AT ALPINE HILLS SNOW PARK

Sunday, February 6, 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Family Christian Ed is planning another fun day of tubing at Alpine Hills Snow Park. FCE is helping to reduce the cost to \$5 per person. We are trying to secure the 2:00-3:30 time slot, but before we can do that we need to know how many people will join us! Please contact Debbie in the office as soon as possible so we can get a head count!

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Tuesday, Feb 1
7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study
5:30 PM – DVT

Wednesday, Feb 2
10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
4:00 PM – Executive Committee
No Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 3
9:30 AM – Carillons
No Hospitality Team
5:00 PM – JD Board Meeting
No Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 4
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb 5
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, Feb 6 Communion
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store
2:00 PM – Family tubing Alpine Hills Snow Park

Monday, Feb 7
11:30 AM - Serious Soup

Tuesday, Feb 8
7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study
5:00 PM – Foundation Meeting
6:30 PM – Presbytery Meeting

Wednesday, Feb 9
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
12:00 PM – Covid Committee
No Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 10
9:30 AM – Carillons
No Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 11
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb 12
No Scheduled Activities
No Bridge Clinic

Sunday, Feb 13
Budget and Foundation Meeting
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Budget and Foundation Meeting
11:00 AM – Fudge Sunday
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

Tuesday, Feb 15
7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study
5:00 PM – Missions Ministry

Wednesday, Feb 16
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:00 PM – Trustees Ministry
No Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 17
9:30 AM – Carillons
No Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 18
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb 19
9:00 AM Bridge Clinic

Sunday, Feb 20
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store
11:15 AM – Family CE Ministry Team

Monday, Feb 21
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, Feb 22
7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study

Wednesday, Feb 23
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
No Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 24
9:30 AM – Carillons
12:00 PM – JD Executive
5:30 PM – Governing Council
No Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 25
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb 26
10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen
1:00 PM – Neighborhood Planning Luncheon

Sunday, Feb 27
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, Feb 28
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
6:30 PM – Worship Ministry Team

ANNUAL BUDGET AND FOUNDATION MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Join together (method TBA) at 11:00 am **Sunday, February 13, 2022** for the Annual Budget and Foundation Meeting. Budget packets will be available February 6.



Pictured: Office Manager Debbie Wise in front of our broken copier that she creatively rigged to keep us functioning through Christmas. Not pictured: Building Manager Jeff Byrne and Chair of Trustees Jim Delmore racing around the building keeping it warm and functioning for us all.

JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN THANK YOU

by Marge Maynard

A BIG (belated) THANK YOU to all who helped in November, especially Steve and Mitzi Muntz who offered to be my personal assistants!!! We are so blessed to have members who are so supportive of our mission to the neighborhood community. The world works best when people who don't know you show they care about you.

Our next date for serving lunch will be February 26. I am heading up the team and am anticipating preparing 'to go' lunches again, so a crew of about 5 masked souls will be sufficient for this day. Contact: mtm.home@me.com or the church office if you can participate that day. FYI future dates are April 23, June 18, August 27, October 29 and November 26.

ALTAR FLOWERS CALENDAR

We have Sundays available for anyone who wants to participate in providing flowers for the chancel area. Just select a date and contact Debbie & Mary to confirm which open Sunday you want to donate an arrangement.

Pepper Creek is the florist that we use as they will deliver on Saturday and the flowers are freshest. (you may use any florist or greenhouse you wish) and if you prefer to pick up and bring the arrangement in by 9:30 on Sunday that's just fine. Please let the office know if you want to participate this year.

FUDGE SUNDAY!!

It is a real thing and coming to us on Sunday, February 13. Enjoy take home fudge for Valentine's Day or eat while you view the Annual Budget Meeting.

Rooted in
Love

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season.
Psalm 1:3a



STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

Dear Church friends,

If you've read the histories of the First Presbyterian and Second Congregational churches found on our website then you know we have just begun our 173rd year as two congregations that are now one. (Where has the time gone?) We have served downtown Rockford and beyond for more than sixteen decades. What is the secret to our staying power? It is faithful church members and friends like you who have caught and continually renewed the vision of our founders. It is your time, talent and treasure that maintains and grows our ministry in the name of our Lord and Savior.

The time and talent of our Governing Council members includes responsibility for the financial stability of Second First Church. The Council relies on your monetary pledge to create a budget that undergirds our church mission. If you have not yet offered your estimate of how much you plan to give this year it is not too late to do so. Contact the church office for a pledge card and send it in. It will be a great help to those you've elected to guide us into another year of sharing the good news of God's loving care with our words and actions.

Your Trustees Stewardship subcommittee,
Jennifer Archer, Phil Davidson, Karen Hill, David Jones, David Noel, Katy Paterson, Darlene Riddle, Ann Stites.

COFFEE CLASS LENTEN SERIES

The interaction between religion and science is one often staged as conflict, but there are various ways the disciples interact in constructive ways as well as greet each other with indifference. This Lenten series will explore the overall relationship between Christianity and science from both a broad view as well as specific issues where they complement and further our understanding. We will also be using the devotional Lent is Not Rocket Science to connect this to our individual spiritual development. Series begins March 6. Look for more information to come or contact Andy Newgren with questions.



MIDWEEK LENTEN GATHERINGS: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

Join virtually each Wednesday to worship, pray together and experience/learn about a different spiritual practice each week. A spiritual practice is anything you do on a regular basis to bring you closer to God. We'll hear from one "expert" each week and share our collective faith journeys. Try on a new practice each week and see what works for you. God is always ready to come closer to us, so let's show up in new ways.

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

Wednesday, March 2
6:30 p.m. In person and Facebook Live

KFACT's annual holiday party returned in December, thanks in big part to the generosity of Second First Church. The mission team provided dinner for over 50 KFACT mentees, each girl received a gift of pajamas & slippers to ensure they had something for Christmas. This was an overnight event filled with games, social activities, and most importantly an opportunity for mentors and volunteers to connect with the girls on a deeper level. The KFACT staff went without sleep that night, but it was so worth it! Each KFACT staff has a group of girls ranging from 20-50 that we work with weekly with one on one mentorship, in addition to our middle school groups at the school.

This month the focus was college readiness for our high school seniors. All KFACT mentees have completed their application and financial aid process, so we will be shifting our focus to scholarships. Seniors have been meeting one on one weekly with staff to ensure they are prepared for their post-secondary plan.

KFACT staff continues to work with existing community partners to identify and secure support services to address the learning gap our students face. Due to capacity/Covid quarantines our partnership with Rockford Lutheran & Boylan High School was unable to roll out this fall. Educational Support Resources will be a priority focus for KFACT in 2022. In person groups at the schools will continue 2nd semester and KFACT is planning on adding Kennedy Middle School due to the high needs and requests for RPS administration. We will share additional educational developments next month. As promised, I have included photos from the KFACT holiday party.

Happy New Year from KFACT!



Conrad plays in the water while Rev. Rebecca prepares to baptize him.

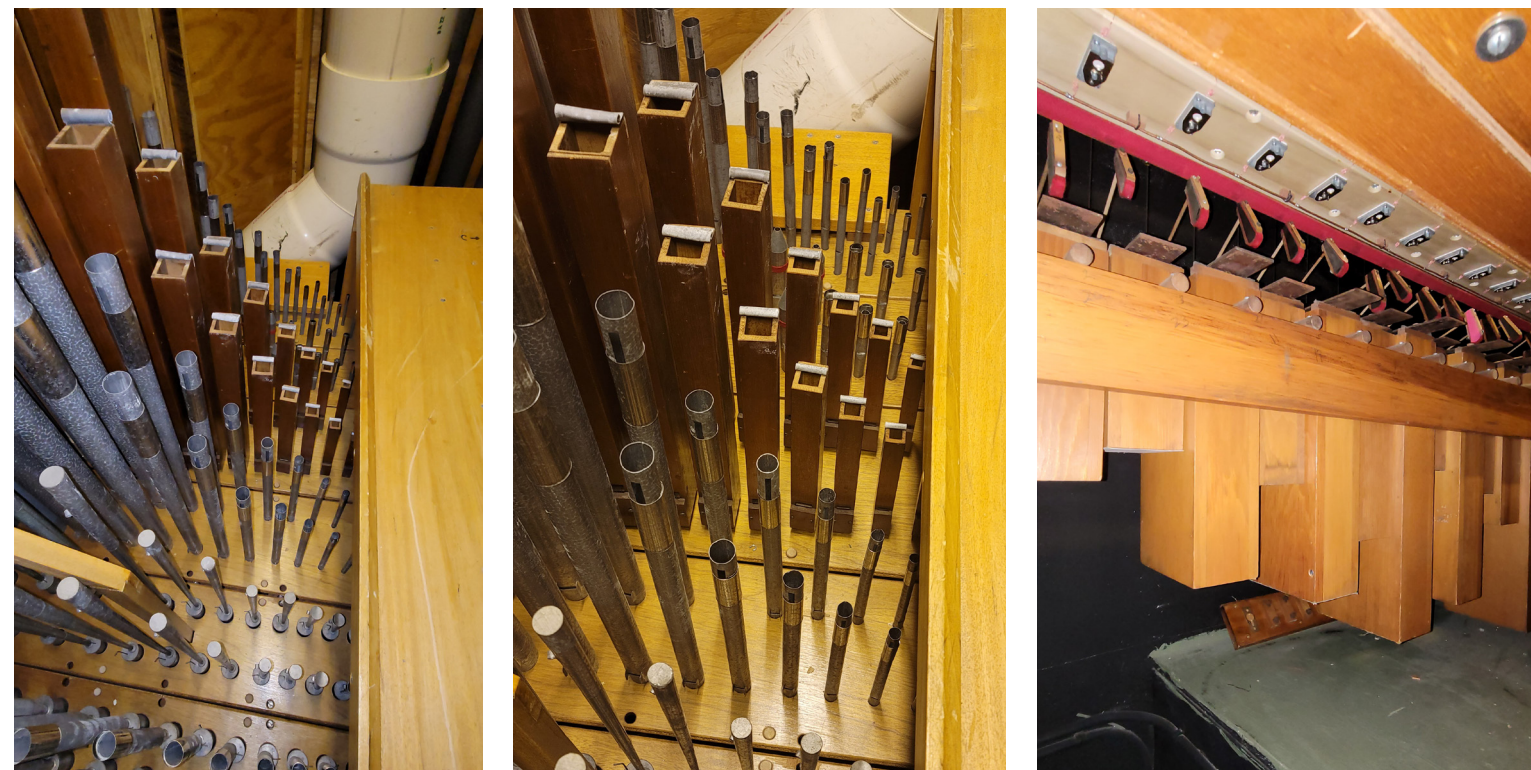
FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

by Valerie Blair

This installment will describe the division called the Choir (on some organs called the Positif). The pipes that make up this division are located on the right side, as you are facing the front of the church, and on the console, it is the lowest manual (keyboard). It is where the recently repaired harp and celesta unit is located. This division has an Oboe stop that is very nice, if it would just stay in tune. I try to utilize it right after one of the two tunings a year we get with our contract. The other reed stop is one I frequently use, the Clarinet, which has an especially lovely sound. The reeds and flues on the choir are softer than in other divisions, so I use them for quieter pieces. The other one I use a lot for a flute sound is called the Koppel flute. This organ has several nice flute sounds, but this one is especially clear.

The pictures here show you:

1. Some of the pipes in the choir, and behind the pipes you can see the giant pvc wind pipe, where the air to the organ travels.
2. The harp and celesta unit (hammers that play the bars, like a xylophone).
3. Wood pipes, open metal pipes, and closed (stopped) pipes



SECONDFIRST IN THE NEWS

Rockford Register Star Feature



The Rev. Rebecca White Newgren, left, and Joe Woods play cards Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, at the Overnight Cafe, which is run out of the gymnasium at Second Congregational/First Presbyterian Church of Rockford. SUSAN MORAN/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR



Nathan Frey of Rockford settles in for a night on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, in the gymnasium of Second Congregational/First Presbyterian Church of Rockford. The church runs the Overnight Cafe in the gym during the winter months. SUSAN MORAN/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR