

SecondFirst Church

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

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



DEAR STAFF AND CONGREGATION

Many of us joined in the discussion with Molly Carlson about church governance after church a few weeks ago. Molly encouraged us to explore some new ideas for church governance. She proposed that we think about how many members we really need at monthly ministry team meetings. She suggested that more people could be called to help with projects, but we may not need so many on each team.

For those of you not currently on a ministry team please, don't think that this article doesn't pertain to you and quit reading. Please think about how you could volunteer for special occasions or projects. I know that as chairperson for funeral receptions for the Hospitality Ministry Team, we have a list of people we can call to help with funeral receptions. We find these people so valuable. Not only do we need people to volunteer, but we also need people to call those volunteers when there is a need for help. Maybe you can't help physically, but you could make phone calls.

As a member of the Nominating Ministry team for several years I am fully aware of the problems trying to recruit enough members for each team. Congratulations to Phil Davidson and the rest of the Nominating Ministry Team for filling almost all the team slots this year.

DVT will be discussing these ideas with teams this year. Ministry team chairpersons, please take some time at a team meeting to discuss some of these ideas. Perhaps you will be able to come up with a list of times when you could use some volunteers.

Ultimately it will be up to each team to decide how many members their team needs. It may also not be necessary for each team to meet monthly. At some point it may also involve some bylaw changes.

As this will be my last article for the newsletter, I'd like to thank all those of you who have helped me this year. I sincerely appreciate the aid from staff, lay leaders, and the congregation. It's been an unforgettable year.

Peace,
Katy Paterson



Palm Sunday worship and Passion Play

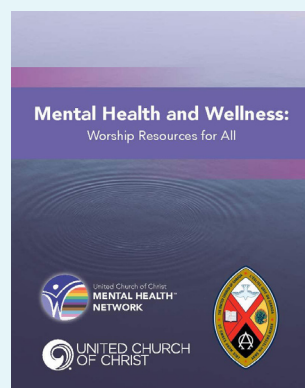


Our Easter celebration was filled with worship, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and beautiful Spring flowers. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Easter service.



NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS: WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR ALL



Mental Health and Wellness: Worship Resources for All is a free, 31-page PDF document. It offers prayers, litanies, sermon starters, hymn suggestions, study ideas and more. Mental Health Sunday is May 15 in the UCC. It's May 1 in the United Church of Canada. May is Mental Health Awareness Month in the U.S.; in Canada, May 2-8 is Mental Health Week.

The resource was jointly produced by the UCC Mental Health Network, the UCC Disabilities and Mental Health Justice ministry and partners in the Canadian church. It was also featured in a UCC "Thursdays for the Soul" webinar on April 21. A recording is available here, at the UCC YouTube channel. The two denominations became "full communion" partners in 2015. Jointly produced worship materials are part of that partnership. The churches collaborated on an Advent resource last year. **Read more: www.ucc.org**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) OUR KIDS AND MENTAL HEALTH



The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association have declared child and adolescent mental health a national emergency. It's a crisis that has been worsened by the pandemic, they said, and one that disproportionately impacts children and youth in communities of color.

Thomas-Bush launched mental health check-ins at the church last fall, which has led to the creation of a volunteer leadership team of mental health advocates. These advocates are high school students specially trained to lead workshops for middle school students in mindfulness and prayer practices. Currently there are seven students being trained. They are all in different places in their mental health journey and all want to help others learn these skills. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee appreciates your patience these past few weeks, and we now wish to announce that Rev. Rebecca has resigned from her position as our senior pastor as we have concluded with her that it is best we go our separate ways. She has been offered a severance package and is satisfied with the terms. This is effective immediately and we will soon start the process for moving forward. We thank Rev. Rebecca for her service to the Church and the community, and we wish her and her family the very best in the future. A formal letter concerning this matter will be forthcoming. Because this is a personnel matter, details must remain confidential.

We acknowledge how stressful uncertainty can be, but rest assured that we are experiencing just as much stress as we struggle to resolve matters in the most respectful way for all. Because this is a personnel matter, details must remain confidential and there is a process required that cannot be rushed. We would be grateful for your patience as we live through this time.



A little bit from Pastor Becky E.

I find myself saying this a lot lately...."The ship is still sailing," and so it is. We have the opportunity now to invite people with diverse views and similar views to the pulpit each Sunday.

On May 8, the Rev. Norm Shirk will be joining us in the pulpit. Our own David Jones will be preaching on May 22 and there will be a surprise guest for June 5. Our Ministry Team meetings are still going strong. Our mission outreach will still continue with more opportunities to reach out in the future. Our Call to Care program is beginning to be formed.

Ecclesiastes 3 says, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." It is now time for SecondFirst to turn the page again.

Let us stay together, be in prayer together, worship and have fellowship together. Let us stay together for the best is yet to be.

Blessings and Peace to you.



The Calla Lilies on the altar are symbolic of Jesus' Resurrection. Considered "White robed apostles of hope" Calla lilies were found growing in the Garden of Gethsemane after Christ's crucifixion. It was said they sprang up where his tears fell to the ground on his way to the cross.



Donna Schadd, Jan Novak, Anne Stratemeyer, and Mark Stratemeyer who organized and upgraded the library.



Alice Uphouse used her extraordinary talents to create this Lenten visualization.



After worship on Palm Sunday we enjoyed the sweet treat of Lemon Bars.



TOWER HILL

Tower Hill camping is just around the corner. This year camping is July 7-10. This is a great experience for all ages, especially Children! Ok kids, you need to bring your parents also. Tower Hill is a UCC retreat center located next to Warren Dunes state park located in southeast Michigan, a 3-4 hour drive. This year we have to give a special thanks to the Baker Campership scholarship fund for paying for our stay. Camp is a 15 minute walk away from Beautiful lake Michigan and our own private beach ! Did I mention sand and water?! At Camp we have a large Bathhouse with showers and a large covered area with tables. There are electrical hookups at each site. Firewood is provided with fire rings and picnic tables. In the past we have had tent campers, RV campers, pop up campers, pickup campers. Contact Doug Phillips for more information at 815-494-0112. There will be a meeting soon to answer questions.

JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT



Neighborhood Personal Safety Night
Our 1st quarterly neighborhood empowerment event was held April 12th. Assistant Deputy Chief Joel Givens talked about the importance of knowing your neighbor and Community Resource Officer Brandon Burke did a presentation on "target hardening" or how to make your place of residence less appealing to criminals. Everyone attending received "screamers", personal safety devices that make very loud noises to scare criminals away.

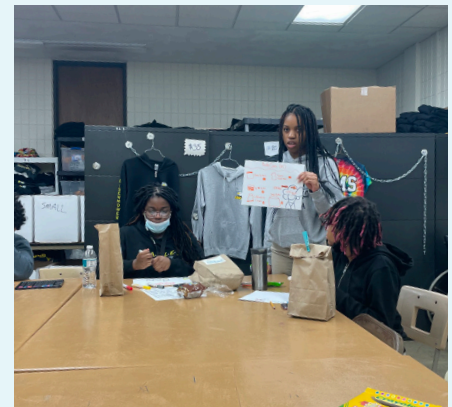


Small Engine Repair Program
Our small engine repair program began April 12th, also! We have 5 students who are helping us dip our toes in the water. We'll open the classes to more students in the following sessions.

KFACT UPDATE

Spring has finally sprung and KFACT is preparing for summer. This month we hosted a Summer Planning Night. Girls worked with their mentors to set personal and academic goals and things they want to accomplish before the end of the school year. We will continue to provide tutoring at the Girls Space, both in person and virtually to help students finish the semester strong. We are so thankful for the Second First Mission Team for the gift cards previously donated to KFACT for mentee incentives.

The students at Eisenhower presented their personal business plans in groups and the winners received gift card prizes. We are still in need of group sponsors to provide girls with lunch during the KFACT group. If you would like to sponsor a school or contribute to our end of year school celebration please contact: Rachel Robinson at rachelrobinson@k-fact.org.



MAY CALENDAR *via Zoom

Sunday, May 1 Communion
Becky Erbe 25th Anniversary
 8:30 AM - Coffee Class*
 10:00 AM - Worship Service
 10:20 AM - Sunday School
 11:00 AM - Celebration in gym

Monday, May 2
 11:00 AM - Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 3
 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM - Narrative Bible Study*
 6:00 PM - DVT

Wednesday, May 4
 4:00 PM - Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 5
 No Carillons
 No Hospitality Team*
 11:00 AM - Shelter Care Ministries Luncheon
 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 6
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 7
 No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 8 Norm Shirk Mother's Day
 8:30 AM - Coffee Class*
 10:00 AM - Worship Service
 10:20 AM - Sunday School
 11:00 AM - Fair Trade Shop

Monday, May 9
 11:30 AM - Serious Soup
 5:00 PM - Deacons Ministry*

Tuesday, May 10
 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM - Narrative Bible Study*
 5:00 PM - Foundation Meeting

Wednesday, May 11
 12:00 PM - Covid Committee

Thursday, May 12
 No Carillons
 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 13
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 14
 8:00 AM - Landscape Cleanup
 9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, May 15 Peanut Bells
 8:30 AM - Coffee Class*
 10:00 AM - Worship Service
 10:20 AM - Sunday School
 11:00 AM - Chopped Event
 11:00 AM - Fair Trade Shop

Monday, May 16
 11:30 AM - Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 17
 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM - Narrative Bible Study*
 5:00 PM - Missions Ministry*

Wednesday, May 18
 5:00 PM - Trustees*

Thursday, May 19
 No Carillons
 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

Friday May 20
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 21
 No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 22 Dave Jones
 8:30 AM - Coffee Class*
 10:00 AM - Worship Service
 10:20 AM - Sunday School
 11:00 AM - Fair Trade Shop
 11:15 AM - Family CE

Monday, May 23
 11:30 AM - Serious Soup
 6:30 PM - Worship/Fellowship Team

Tuesday, May 24
 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM - Narrative Bible Study*

Wednesday, May 25
 No Scheduled Activities

Thursday, May 26
 No Carillons
 12:00 PM - JD Executive
 5:30 PM - Governing Council*
 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 27
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 28
 No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 29
 8:30 AM - Coffee Class*
 10:00 AM - Worship Service
 10:20 AM - Sunday School
 11:00 AM - Fair Trade Shop

Monday, May 30 Memorial Day
 Office Closed

Tuesday, May 31
 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
 12:00 PM - Narrative Bible Study*



CHURCH LANDSCAPE CLEANUP Saturday, May 14 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Save Saturday, May 14 as you will have the opportunity to help clean up and beautify the landscaping of your church. There will be plants to plant, shrubs to prune, mulch to spread, flower beds to clean up and more. Please bring any tools you like to work with. If you have a wheelbarrow and can get it here, please bring it. Don't forget your gloves or any tools you would like to bring. See you Saturday, May 14. Contact: Ron Schaad



CHOPPED EVENT Sunday, May 15 after Church

It's cooking up to be a great time! We are hosting the (now) Annual Chopped Challenge after church! This year it will be in person in the church kitchen. This event is open to ALL ages and we would love to be able to pair youth with adults for our teams. What culinary delight will you create with a basket full of surprise ingredients? Teams will cook ONE main dish that can be anything, but must include each of the secret basket ingredients. Sign up in the lobby Sunday, May 8, or email rachel.huffman@secondfirst.org to sign up.

PENTECOST/STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING Sunday, June 5

SecondFirst Church, as part of both the UCC and Presbyterian denominations, participates in 4 special offerings during the calendar year. On June 5, we will receive the Pentecost/ Strengthen the Church offering. The money we collect supports youth, among other areas, and helps them form a foundation of faith. 40% of the offering supports programs in local communities. Please be generous with your gift. Please note the "Pentecost" offering in the memo section of your check.



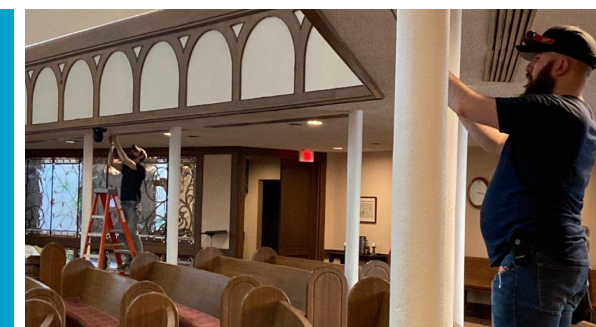
Being Part of the Neighborhood by Jim Delmore

Our church has played an important part in the downtown area for as long as it has been at 318 N. Church St. This past month we have hosted the Rockford Public School system for a place to practice for the Citywide Musical. The Mexican Consulate Has also used our gym for a two day event and the Basketball League is using it now.

In the near future other organizations will ask to use our facilities now that the Covid restrictions are easing. We should be proud that our church is available every day of the week, not just used on Sunday. Our grounds also offer a place to meet rest and take in the beauty of the mural along with the flowers in the summer.

The Jeremiah Development gardens are on our grounds providing vegetables to our neighbors. A new Jeremiah development program has recently started in our garage teaching and mentoring 14 to 18 year old youth in small engine repair. Jeff Byrne, our building manager came to Trustees asking for permission to proceed with seeing if our garage could be used to hold engine repair training classes sponsored by Jeremiah Development. Permission was given. The Jeremiah Development program is called Helps / Small Engine Repair, a new skills training program serving the community through training and education. A meal is served after the class is done. Programs like this and the people willing to help will make an everlasting impression on those that attend. I cannot think of any better use of a garage.

The installation of our upgraded video equipment has begun!



MAY worship schedule

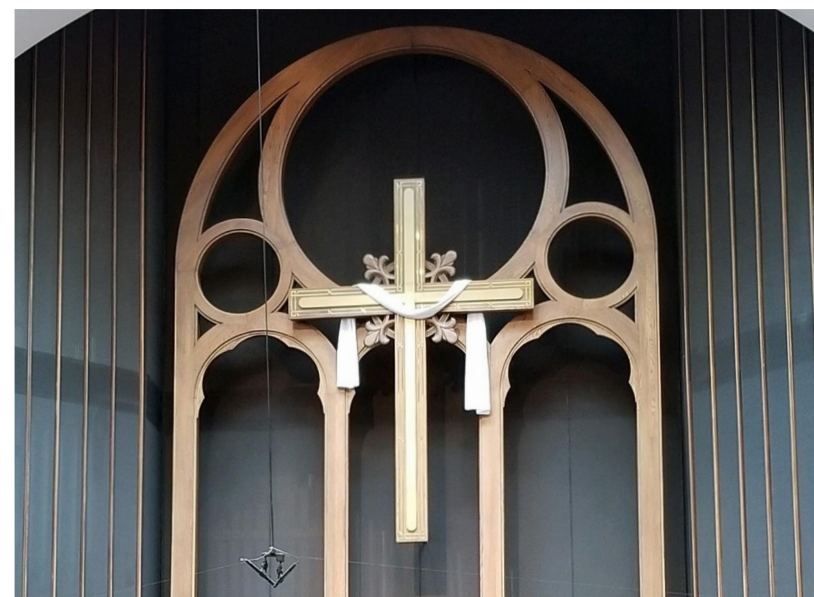
May 1: Becky Erbe Celebration and Communion

May 8: Norm Shirk and Mother's Day

May 15: Becky Erbe

May 22: Dave Jones

May 29: Becky Erbe



REFLECTIONS FROM THE INCOMING MODERATOR

by Phil Davidson

Back on a Sunday morning in 2013, my wife, Shirley, and I, along with a number of other Presbyterians, walked out of our church building for the last time. We headed west to the intersection of Park and Church, where Second Congregational members welcomed us to their church family with warm smiles and open arms. It was a blessed day.

As I reflect back over those nine years, I remember sitting in the pew listening to someone called the “moderator” giving the morning announcements, and I wondered what exactly is a moderator. In many ways, I have definitely discovered the meaning of that title.

Shirley and I are blessed with two fabulous adult children, Susan and Matthew, and two delightful grandchildren, Karly and Jacob (who was baptized in this church about six years ago). I worked in the broadcast marketing and community engagement fields, and Shirley is a retired educator in special education and reading. We are both members of the Kiwanis Club of Rockford, a service organization whose mantra is to serve the children of this area.

I am sincerely humbled and honored to be your new moderator for the 2022-2023 year. Throughout this coming year, I hope to become better acquainted with all of you and to continue attending as many ministry team meetings as possible.

Adlai Stevenson said, “It’s hard to lead a cavalry charge, if you think you look funny on a horse.” As I assume the duties of moderator, I will make every effort to sit straight in the saddle and hold the reins properly, even when that horse might be a bucking bronco. Blessings to all.



HUGE, COLOSSAL, GIGANTIC PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY APPEAL

by Zan Picchioni



...For our community’s disadvantaged children and donated to them by the Rock River Valley Pantry...

Let’s overflow the large container at the back of our sanctuary with jars of peanut butter and jelly.

Starting right away, your Mission Ministry Team is requesting donations of peanut butter in plastic jars only or monetary donations for peanut butter. Jelly is also being requested, and all are being collected for the Rock River Valley Pantry.

Your donation(s) will be used to feed needy kids who aren’t able to rely on school lunches during summer vacation. Nothing’s better than a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a few chips, and a glass of milk!!!

The Rock River Valley Pantry serves more than 2,500 kids every month during the summer, when school lunch isn’t an option. “When school is out for the summer, children aren’t always guaranteed a meal, and peanut butter is pretty healthy,” said Executive Director Kim Adams-Bakke. “It’s high in protein. Almost any kid can put together a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It doesn’t require any cooking, and it’s something safe [that] kids can make for themselves while at home.”

The RRV Pantry needs our peanut butter (and jelly) donations before school gets out for the summer. Our appeal will run through June 1st, but you may certainly continue to donate peanut butter, jelly, and other foods throughout the summer, placing them in the container in our sanctuary along the back wall. Should you prefer to donate \$20, please write in the memo line of your check “Rock River Valley Pantry Drive” or “RRVP Drive”. \$20 will buy a case of 12 jars (18 oz. each) due to the purchasing power at the Rock River Pantry. Thank you in advance from our community’s neediest children for your generous hearts.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES UPDATE

By Rachel Huffman

Once upon a time fall used to be my favorite season of the year. While I still love fall, spring has taken its place as the number one season in my heart. I love spring for one huge reason: it signifies the end of winter! As a child I feel that winter was a wondrous time, for in our youth we were better able to appreciate the snow and to see the fun in it rather than seeing something pesky that we have to manage.

Spring to me signifies a beautiful time of transition and regrowth. We as people move through seasons of our lives in the same way, growing and transitioning. It is truly a privilege for me to be able to witness the children of our congregation as they move through the different seasons of their lives.

This spring is sure to be one that brings us new challenges, adventures, and ways to serve our neighbor. Youth are like seeds that I plant in my garden. They require many things to grow successfully. Sunshine, water, patience, time. Plants, as it turns out, are not so dissimilar from humans. We must give our youth (and ourselves) patience, time, wisdom, love, and invite them always to the ever flowing waters of the Holy Spirit. Children are like a tomato plant that requires something to grow around, to climb, to help lift them up, then we must be that which they can grow around. A tomato plant without a support struggles to grow. It needs guidance.

We have a unique opportunity to be a positive, uplifting force in the life of so many children. I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart all of the congregants who have these children in mind always. I am humbled by the generosity and appreciation of this church family. I encourage you to greet the youth of our congregation if you haven’t before. I will be encouraging them to do the same with our members. I believe that our children are part of the congregation as a whole and I want them to feel firmly rooted in the garden that is our church family.

Easter was truly spectacular this year and I was so pleased to see so many new faces interspersed among those who I have known and loved for so long. I am grateful for each and every one of you, no matter if you are a child of 1 year to 100 years old! May God grow the love and joy in this church as we make our way through this new and hopeful year.



SECONDFIRST MUSIC LIBRARY RENOVATION

By Jim Burrig

When Donna Schaad first saw the SecondFirst music library she said: “Oh, my!” The music was stored in folders in dilapidated cardboard boxes that made it hard to access and file. Some of the music was probably 100 years old and was in poor condition. So, Jan Novak and Anne Stratemeyer joined together to start the task of re-organizing and upgrading the library. Mark Stratemeyer joined them to use his expertise to set up a database that would provide information for each title in the library regarding the composer, liturgical season, and voice parts. They purchased plastic baskets and hanging folders to make the sheet music more accessible. They organized and cataloged all of the music from Second Congregational and First Presbyterian. They purged old music that was in unusable condition. All of these improvements were financed through allocated funds and the Ruth Ax memorial fund. Between the two churches, there are over 2000 octavos now in the library.

