

## SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)  
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Organization US  
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Rockford, Illinois

JUNE 2022

# THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

*Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace*



## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Blessings to you all!

Ahh...the church life! We have busy times of the year – Fall kick-off, Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. We have not quite so busy times, like the summer months. But even in the not so busy times, there is a lot going on. Serious Soup still happens, Ministry Team meetings still happen. We still have groups using our building and in the parking lot.

Twice a month Showers of Blessings sets up in our parking lot. This program is based out of Mendota, Illinois and wanted to reach out into urban areas. This group has a portable shower unit that allows two people at a time to use the showers. They also set up a grill for lunch and give out clothing. They also pray for people. Showers and feeding people is also what we do, but it is nice when efforts for those in need are extended beyond. Showers of Blessings and SecondFirst are doing the same work, sowing the seeds of the love of Christ.

The Park District will be back again this summer for their Therapeutic Rec Summer Camp. Teens with special needs spend time here playing games, making crafts and dancing! The camp begins the week of June 13 and runs through the beginning of August.

Watch the Tower and Enews for upcoming church fellowship opportunities that will also take place this summer.

So maybe summer is busier than I thought!

Peace,  
Pastor Becky



Big thanks to Wes and Steve for all their work on our new video system.



Children gather around Rachel Huffman during the Early Word.

## NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

#### UCC OFFERS CONGREGATIONS RESOURCES TO ASSIST IF TITLE 42 ENDS



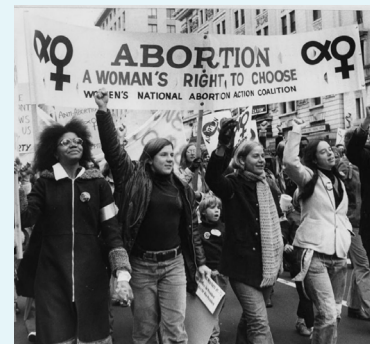
As an immigrant welcoming church, the United Church of Christ is looking to the end of Title 42, a public health order that blocks migrants at the border from seeking asylum. That policy, enacted in 2020 by the Trump administration during COVID-19, may be days away from being lifted.

If Congress doesn't pass a bill to stop it, or if a federal judge doesn't block it, Title 42 ends on May 23.

"The United Church of Christ welcomes the Biden administration's decision to end the inhumane Title 42 policy, which has been used to deny the rights of asylum seekers," said the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister of Wider Church Ministries and Operations. "This decision needs to be the first step toward ending other discriminatory U.S. policies that intentionally marginalize immigrants." [Read more: www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

#### REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND THE PC(USA)



Through Investment supports reproductive justice through shareholder activism, and the church's Social Justice and Peacemaking Unit works with the interdenominational Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

In 2019, responding to Alabama's passage of anti-abortion legislation, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) issued a statement outlining the denomination's position. The now-Advocacy Committee on Women's Concerns brought an overture on reproductive justice to the 224th General Assembly (2020) that was postponed because of the shortened online business docket and will be taken up at the hybrid 225th General Assembly this summer. A report from the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force also addresses reproductive justice. [Read more: presbyterianmission.org](http://presbyterianmission.org)



Together we celebrated Pastor Becky Erbe's 25 years of outstanding service.



A group from our church attended the "Bans Off Our Bodies" Rally held on Saturday, May 14.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

by Phil Davidson

Here I sit in front of my computer contemplating what I should write as my first reflections as moderator. But, what exactly does reflection mean? Should I be looking into a mirror while I am writing? I can tell you that will not produce any creative thoughts...quite the contrary. Or, should I wax with profound statements of grandeur? I think not. So, instead, let me tell you about Ralph and Edith who had been married for 25 years. Edith says to Ralph, "How come you never say you love me anymore?" Ralph answers, "I told you once. If anything changes, I'll let you know."

We just celebrated Pastor Becky Erbe's 25 years of service to this church; and unlike Ralph, we made a big deal out of it. And rightfully so, as Becky has shown such great love and done so much for this congregation over those 25 years, often in ways beyond her job description. And what also impressed me was how you put your love to work to create and organize such a special day.

Speaking of putting love to work, I invite you to think about the service this church provides to the neighborhood, the community, and our very own congregation. Let's see, there is Serious Soup, the Bridge Clinic, Overnight Café, Boots for Haskell, Jubilee Center Soup Kitchen, food items for Rock River Valley Pantry, the Small Engine Repair Program, support and housing for KFACT, participation in Jeremiah Development activities, Neighborhood Trunk or Treat, CROP Hunger Walk, just to name a few.

This church and all of you who comprise this wonder body of believers spread God's love by truly making a difference in people's lives. This is why I am so humbled and honored to serve as your moderator. We are going through a time of change in our church family; and, despite those changes, this congregation will continue to show God's love and care for our neighbors and each other.

To paraphrase a famous Christmas song, "We need a little humor, right this very minute! We need a little humor now." I hope that you will allow me to continue to include some humor (cornball at times) in the announcements on Sunday morning. Bob Hope said, "I have seen what a laugh can do. It can transform almost unbearable tears into something bearable, even hopeful."

## Strengthen the Church: Pentecost Offering

God's vision for the world is that everyone finds their place in God's kin-dom — in God's household. At Pentecost, we celebrate God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit so that everyone may hear and know a word of welcome. We are all connected in God's household — living, learning and celebrating as the church... together.

In this season of new awakening, we seek to Strengthen the Church as we look particularly to children, youth and young adults for their new thoughts, approaches and questions. The psalmist reminds us that faith is established in our earliest years, saying, "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth." These youngest members of the household of faith need our support to reach their full potential in faith and life; and while we teach and lead, we often find that these younger ones give us new insights into our own faith and in how the Holy Spirit is moving in our world.

Your gifts to the Pentecost Offering strengthens our church by supporting our ministries with children, youth and young adults in our community, across the nation and around the world.

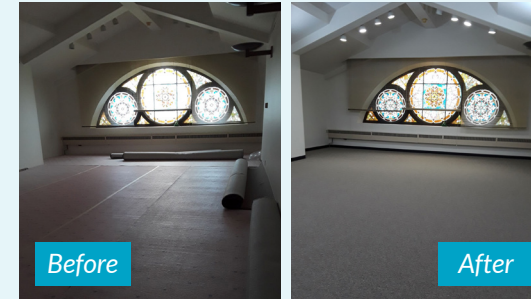
As you consider a gift to the Pentecost Offering, remember that 40% remains with us to support ministries with younger people in our congregation and community. The remainder of your offering is forwarded to our two denominations to strengthen their ministries to others.

During this Pentecost season we join in celebrating our part in building lives of faith among our children, youth and young adults. These younger members of the household of faith are not just the future of the church — they ARE the church. Please give generously.



## GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Jim Delmore reported that a new copier is on backorder. The video system is installed. Jeff is mentoring neighborhood youth, teaching them how to repair small engines. The Bell Room is being painted and carpet will be installed. Pianos in Gordon Chapel and Emerson Hall will be removed.



### Ongoing Business

- » Covid Committee—We will continue to wear masks in church.
- » Music Director Search—Jim Burrigh reported that the committee completed a job description and advertisement which will be sent to schools and churches as well as AGO and ACBA.

### One Minute Ministry Team Highlights

- » Worship/Music: Voted to discontinue the narrative lectionary and return to Revised Standard this fall.
- » Adult Ed: Lenore reported they will start a new series – a 5-week study on Embracing Spiritual Awakening from Diane Butler Bass.
- » DVT: Karen reported a new initiative related to Belonging coming soon, including an ice cream social for the neighborhood. They are also looking at Governance and are asking each Ministry Team to consider how people they really need on their team. Will look at Communities that report/serve ministry teams but would not be actual members.
- » FCE: They are working on planting in the open lot.
- » Bob Langford reported they have been working on media things with Amy. She raised her rates, so we are working month to month with her while we explore other options. Beth Howard has offered to help with marketing. Bob completes his term of service on 5/15 but will continue with Becky as administrative support. Staff management returns to Becky for now.



Seth Reinold used his creative talents to make a chalk drawing of the church.

Colorful Communion Table flowers brought the beauty of Spring inside.

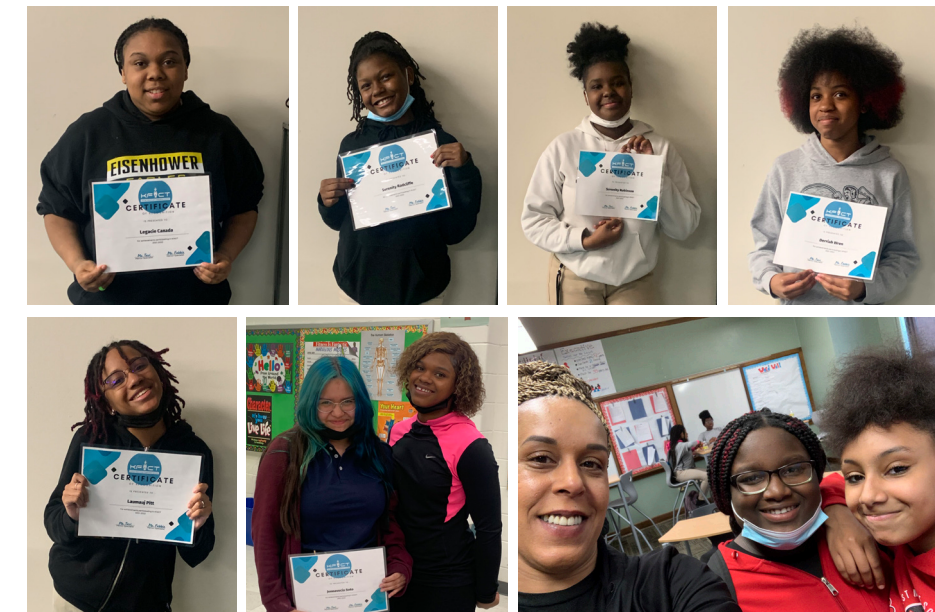


## KFACT UPDATE

KFACT has had a busy month with the end of the school year approaching. Please help us celebrate Tauryn a senior at Auburn High School. She had been in KFACT since 6th grade. She will be attending University of Arkansas Pine Bluff and recently made the college dance/cheer team. She also was one of three KFACT finalists for the Alpine Kiwanis scholarship and was awarded a scholarship this month.



We have also been wrapping up our school based prevention education programming with the middle schoolers. The 8th graders will be transitioning to the high school program in the fall. Ms. Rachel met with and connected with them at their celebration at Eisenhower, Kennedy, Flinn, and Resa Middle Schools. We will share more from Kennedy next month, they are our largest class of 8th grade mentees, so we are so excited to have them join the high school program next year!



# JUNE CALENDAR \*via Zoom

**Wednesday, June 1**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Thursday, June 2**  
9:30 AM – Carillons  
No Hospitality Team  
5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting

**Friday, June 3**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, June 4**  
8:00 AM – Landscape Cleanup

**Sunday, June 5**  
8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

**Monday, June 6**  
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

**Tuesday, June 7**  
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
10:00 AM v Staff Meeting  
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study  
6:00 PM – DVT

**Wednesday, June 8**  
12:00 PM – Covid Committee  
4:00 PM – Executive Committee

**Thursday, June 9**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Friday, June 10**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, June 11**  
9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

**Sunday, June 12**  
8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

**Monday, June 13**  
8:30 AM – Park District Here all Month  
11:30 AM – Serious Soup  
5:00 PM – Deacons/Fellowship

**Tuesday, June 14**  
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study  
5:00 PM – Adult Ed Ministry Team

**Wednesday, June 15**  
5:30 PM – Trustees Ministry  
12:00 PM – Covid Committee

**Thursday, June 16**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Friday, June 17**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, June 18**  
10:00 – AM Jubilee Soup Kitchen

**Sunday, June 19**  
**Father’s Day**  
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, June 20**  
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

**Tuesday, June 21**  
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study  
5:00 PM – Missions Ministry

**Wednesday, June 22**  
12:00 PM – JD Executive

**Thursday, June 23**  
5:30 PM – Governing Council

**Friday, June 24**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, June 25**  
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

**Sunday, June 26**  
8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
10:00 AM – Worship Service  
10:20 AM – Sunday School  
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

**Monday, June 27**  
11:30 AM – Serious Soup  
6:30 PM – Worship Ministry Team

**Tuesday, June 28**  
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
12:00 PM – Narrative Bible Study

**Wednesday, June 29**  
No Scheduled Activities

**Thursday, June 30**  
No Scheduled Activities

**NEW OFFICE HOURS:** Please note the new office hours are Monday-Friday from 8:00 am - 3:30 pm.



**UPCOMING**  
*worship schedule*

**JUNE 5:** Pulpit Talk with Debbie Wise

**JUNE 12:** Becky Erbe

**JUNE 19:** Pastor Putney-retired pastor from Christ the Carpenter Church

**JUNE 26:** Bob Saunders

**JULY 3:** Pulpit Talk with Jim Ozee

**JULY 10:** Becky Erbe



Children gather around Pastor Becky for Early Word.

## HUGE, COLOSSAL, GIGANTIC PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY APPEAL

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 & SunButter (for children with peanut allergies) 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!!!

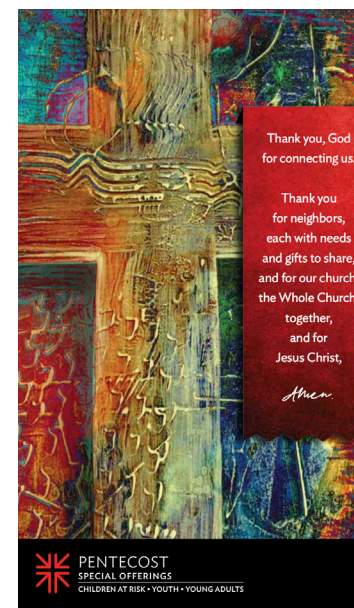
The Rock River Valley Pantry serves more than 2,500 kids every month during the summer, when school lunch isn’t an option. “When school is out for the summer, children aren’t always guaranteed a meal, and peanut butter is pretty healthy,” said Executive Director Kim Adams-Bakke. “It’s high protein. Almost 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 1, 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.

## STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH PENTECOST SPECIAL OFFERING

Sunday, June 5



SecondFirst Church, as part of both the UCC and Presbyterian denominations, participates in four 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. Forty percent of the offering supports programs in local communities. Please note the “Pentecost” offering in the memo section of your check.



Inspiring Mobility & Independence : AMBUCS Bikes were assembled and distributed in our gym.



## CHURCH LANDSCAPE CLEANUP

Saturday, June 4 from 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Even with the great turnout for the last landscape cleanup (pictured above) there is still help needed for other projects. Saturday, June 4 from 8:00am - 12:00pm has been scheduled for this second landscape cleanup. Please bring your favorite tools to work with. Wheelbarrows if you can fit them in your vehicle. One note of caution, if you bring a shovel please be sure it has a blade at least larger than 4 inches. This is for the safety of the shovel.

## SOUP KITCHEN

Saturday, June 18

We will be serving lunch at the Jubilee Center (across Park Street, off the parking lot at Emmanuel Episcopal Church) on Saturday June 18. We will gather at 10 am and assemble sack lunches containing a warm item. Maybe chicken strips! We’d love to have you join us. Contact Marge Maynard ([mtm.home@me.com](mailto:mtm.home@me.com)) if you have questions or would like to be part of the team that day. Thanks!

## CALLED TO CARE

By Lenore Lund

We are excited to announce the formation of a Called to Care ministry right here at SecondFirst Church.

**WHAT IS IT?** This is a lay ministry program designed to expand on pastoral care outreach within our congregation. We are all the church, and all are ministers in God's eyes, so there are many ways we can participate in this important outreach.

**WHO ARE THE RECIPIENTS?** Anyone in need of caring attention at home, in the hospital, in rehab, in nursing facilities – whether for a short time period or indefinitely. Everyone's needs are different, whether giving or receiving pastoral outreach, and this program is tailored accordingly. Called to Care volunteers who wish to do so will also be able to assist the Deacons bringing communion to the homebound.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?** Any amount of your available time/talent can be used. We are looking for men and women to participate. This commitment can include anything from phone chats and/or sending notes to in-person visits or a combination of other outreach opportunities.

**WHAT IS INVOLVED?** There will be seven training sessions scheduled in the weeks ahead of about two hours each. We will hold the sessions at church. As much as possible the times/dates will be established according to the participants' availability. We'll have fun learning this material and you will know you'll be making an important contribution to the needs of our church family. Please contact Lenore Lund at 815-494-9646 or [ldlund23@gmail.com](mailto:ldlund23@gmail.com).



## THE FOOD SECURITY PROJECT FOR SAUT-D'EAU, HAITI AT SECONDFIRST CHURCH

by Roger Greenlaw



*A woman and her husband fill bags of rice from a recent harvest.*



*James Casimir & Son give garden tools to a family near Saut-d'Eau.*

The Haiti Interest Group at Second First Church reports exciting news from our projects in Saut-d'Eau, Haiti. **We are successful in creating food security for hundreds of people.** The 1400 tools and heritage seeds given to over 1100 people have created abundant harvests during their 3 growing seasons each year. The people with tools are sharing with neighbors, but a growing number of families are eager to start their own gardens if they too could receive tools and seeds.

**Last year we realized that there was a significant need for a grain mill for this expanding community of gardeners.** The nearest mill is over an hour away and travel expenses and mill fees are prohibitive for many families. Our idea last year was to buy and install a mill for Saut-d'Eau

and set it up as a NFP (Not for Profit) Coop Mill. Last year you helped raise the \$10,000 needed to purchase a Milling Machine. Now we are applying for grants to fund the \$28,000 cinder block building to house the mill. James Casimir & Family have land available for the mill building and have installed power lines to the property that will be needed.

**This spring we are raising money to buy more tools & seeds** to expand the number of people who can produce their own food. They will grind their corn into cornmeal and their rice into rice flour, and they will be able to sell their excess crop in the marketplace.

**The Haiti Interest Group invites your participation** in this year's fundraiser for Tools & Seeds. If you would like to contribute, please send your check to the Church Office with 'Haiti' in the memo line.

Questions or suggestions to:

James and Odette Casimir 815-319-0741

Roger and Carolyn Greenlaw 815-262-1776, 815-978-0723

## FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

By Valerie Blair

Two years ago, when suddenly, it was necessary to play services in an empty sanctuary, I was astounded at how difficult it was to do. Until then, I hadn't realized how important it was to me to have you here in the room when I play. I genuinely had to work harder to get any feeling into the music, to connect with it; I would imagine you in your usual spots and try to play to that image. It's so much easier when you are actually out there in the pews. I wasn't aware of that until you had to be absent. I am so glad so many of you have returned. I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the church, staff, and all the wonderful volunteer musicians we are fortunate to have here at SecondFirst Church.

Congregation, thank you for all your support and understanding as I took on the responsibilities of Interim Music Director with very little notice. Please know that I really did depend on your acceptance and appreciation of my efforts to pull off a year of music during a pandemic, when the mandates, recommendations, and protocols were, and still are, a moving target.

Staff: Becky, Debbie, Jeff, and Maria, thank you for your support and for tolerating my weaknesses (ugh! Those deadlines!).

And to the choir: oh my. Church, I am writing today to tell you that they have been so very faithful to you. They have muddled through a year with 3 different choir directors, and much of the time, just me to run rehearsals. I know it hasn't been the best, but they did not complain, and just kept showing up. This is who they are: **Jim Burright**, a rock. Sings tenor, baritone, bass, solos, plays guitar for Lenten services, chairs the Worship, Music, and Arts Ministry Team, directs the String Band, and oh yeah, is the head usher. **Phil Blair**, (my dad), always there singing on the bottom with **David Jones**, the two of them seeing who has the lowest note on any given day (I think it's usually Dave). **Bill Zartman**, bass, and violinist when we need one, and his other half **Joyce Zartman**, alto and pinch hitter soprano, frequently play handbells all over the place, after which they race to SecondFirst to sing with the choir. **Doug Phillips**, peanut gallery, big cheerleader, and always ready with the fabulous **Doug Hug**. **Marilyn Hartzog**, alto extraordinaire, ready with helpful suggestions, and just steady support. **Hayley Gotzsche**, our ringer singer, has been in my corner all the way. **Jennifer Archer** hasn't been able to be with us as much this year as in the past (those busy, busy kids!), but we are always so happy to see her and feel her upbeat self in the room when she's here (with her mom **Linda Oshita** at Christmas). **Holly Hegge**, mostly alto, with occasional second soprano, soprano, and even soloist thrown in for seasoning; also assistant to her hubby **Wes**, on sound (or is she his boss?). **Mark and Anne Stratemeyer**, just so solid and reliable, and always a positive presence (and FUNNY). **Jan Novak**, solid alto, and organizer extraordinaire, knowledgeable about how things should be run and get done. **Donna Schaad**, who has graciously volunteered her time to direct the choir through their last Sundays of the year, while the search committee does their thing to find our next choir director.

Donna, Jan, Mark, and Anne spent countless hours organizing the choir library starting last Fall, and they worked a miracle, which was reported on in another article. Many choir members offered their time and talents to play a wonderful variety of music over the year, on Sundays when the choir didn't sing. We will get to hear from many of them again over the summer.

I am genuinely and deeply grateful for all that the choir members did this past year to keep the music alive in our church. Blessings to you all, and to the congregation for your appreciative responses.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES UPDATE

By Rachel Huffman

This year's annual Chopped Challenge was a great success! We had four teams and everyone put out delicious dishes. I can't begin to express how much fun this event is and I encourage you all to check it out when we do it again in 2023. There are also whispers of a baking challenge... perhaps during our winter months? Congrats to Madeline Archer and Abigail King for winning Best Overall, Seth Reinold and Karen Phillips for Best Salad, Sebastian Reinold and Karen Hill for Best Use of Sharks, and Nicholas Archer and Valerie Blair for Best Presentation.



We are also working towards beautifying the vacant lot across the street to become a lovely green space that brings some more joy to our downtown neighbors.

**Pictured (left)** Our Chopped Challenge Teams for 2022 (right) Thanks to Katy Patterson and Arlene Noel for helping us make the Chopped Challenge a success!