

## SecondFirst Church

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

JANUARY 2023

# THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

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



### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Peace and Grace to you all as we enter 2023!

We begin the new year with our 10-year anniversary celebration on January 8. We all have our memories of the day our two churches joined together. We met in the middle of Church Street and Park. Members of Emmanuel

Episcopal met us in the street as well to cheer us on. Together as a new church we entered the building to worship together. I believe the merge was the best thing for both our churches. We can look forward as we go into the future for the next ten years.

This month we also officially welcome Richard Stiltner to our program staff. Richard has an extensive music and ministry background. Currently he leads the Bards of the Willows, the choir group from Wesley Willows. Richard led our choir on Christmas Eve and will be a wonderful addition as Music Director.

Norm Shirk will be joining us in Worship on January 22. The String Band is playing, and the Carillons will lead us out of the month of January, playing January 29.

We have a lot going on, so stayed tuned as we fill you in on all the happenings!

— Becky

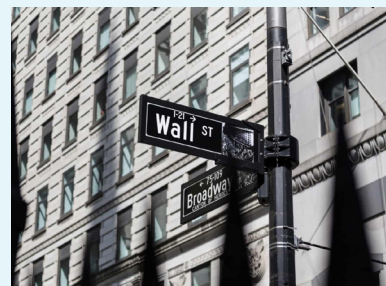


*Festive Christmas cookies were enjoyed by all after worship on Sunday, December 18. Big thanks to everyone who helped make this tasty treat and fellowship time possible.*



## NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST UCC CLIMATE WIN WITH FEDEX IS PART OF A RECORD YEAR OF RAISING RELIGIOUS VOICES TO CORPORATIONS



Like other religious bodies, many congregations and ministries of the United Church of Christ have money to invest. When they do so, they enter the corporate world as shareholders. This gives them a voice — if they choose to use it — in how corporations behave in the world.

In 2022, religious shareholders used that voice in record-setting numbers. A year-end report from the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility noted a steep increase in shareholder resolutions brought by religious groups: "Filings by our members rose to 504, the highest number ever recorded, and up sharply from 307 in 2021." **Read more: [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)**

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) A NEW HYMN BY PC(USA) PASTOR CAROLYN WINFREY GILLETTE LAMENTS TUESDAY'S SUPREME COURT RULING ON TITLE 42



Following Tuesday's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to allow the continued expulsion of asylum seekers from the United States until justices oral arguments on Title 42 in February, the Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette has written a new hymn, "Mary, Joseph! Take Young Jesus!" and based it on Matthew 2:13-18, part of the lectionary reading for Jan. 1, 2023.

In an email, Gillette said she completed the hymn Wednesday. It's set to the tune BEACH SPRING, which is also used in the hymn "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending."

In 2020, the Trump administration put in place pandemic-era limits on asylum, according to an Associated Press report. Those limits are often called Title 42 in reference to a public health law that dates back to World War II. Since the outset of the pandemic, officials have expelled more than 2.5 million asylum seekers on the grounds of preventing Covid from spreading. **Read more: [presbyterianmission.org](http://presbyterianmission.org)**



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

By Phil Davidson

We often celebrate the New Year with noisemakers, toasts, warm hugs (these are good any time of the year), and by singing Auld Lang Syne. With 2022 filled with the continuing dangers of Covid, the war in Ukraine, and political uneasiness right here in our country, it may be easy to fear the coming year rather than participating in celebration. However, Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV) says, "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

We have much to look forward to in 2023...a new Designated Pastor, ongoing programs that serve our neighbors and members, and God's guiding hand as we discover new ways to show His love.

For the New Year, Alfred Lord Tennyson's words ring true:

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go:  
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

I want to close as I did in December, because it comes from the heart. We are a strong church. We are a resilient church. We are a church that will continue to be a beacon of care, hope, and love. Happy New Year! May God bless you and keep you in 2023.

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

by Dave Jones

The last several weeks at church were filled with the joyful Christmas message of God's unfailing love. What a blessing to hear again that the mission to which we have been called is to bring the name of Jesus in word and in deed to downtown Rockford and beyond! I hope you are as convinced as is our Church Council that God is at work in our congregation.

If you have not indicated the level of your financial support for this new year Church Council members hope you will do so now. While a pledge is not required, an estimate of giving assists them in being fiscally responsible as they make ministry and mission plans. They do not want to commit to a project they cannot complete.

If it concerns you to offer a commitment, please know that the church understands. The current economic times are still uncertain for some and making a commitment may seem difficult. At the same time, we want you to know that estimates of giving are precisely that—estimates—and they can be adjusted at any time. Whether you choose to submit a card or not, please know that we are grateful for your continuing support.

If you do not plan to financially support the ministry and mission of our church this year or plan to make a significant reduction from previous levels of support, please notify the stewardship committee as soon as possible. Its chair, David Jones, 815-540-3703, will be happy to accept your call. If you have any questions about giving or about how your offerings become ministry, please feel free to address them to him or Pastor Becky.



### THE ROCKFORD OVERNIGHT CAFÉ IS OPEN

The Rockford Overnight Café is now operating inside the gym at SecondFirst Church through March 5, 2023. The operating hours are nightly from 8:00 pm - 7:00 am. The Café is for those 18 years of age and older.

### WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT!

We are taking donations of meals for dinner and breakfast. You may sign up to provide a meal on Mealtrain: <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/8mkz85> We also need volunteers to assist with guest check-in from 7:30pm - 9:30pm. To sign up, visit: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0948ada92fabf4c43-overnight#/> or call Debbie in the office 815-963-8431 to reserve a day.

## JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Happy New Year! 2023 will be another busy year for Jeremiah Development.

- » Our second small engine class has graduated! There were some bumps and learning opportunities during this session, but we are proud to say two students were able to get their engines running and have received their first Briggs and Stratton certification. Thank you to everyone who cooked meals, donated funds, and mentored this fall. We are making plans for our third class starting in March. Stay tuned for more updates.
- » LOVE Rockford will be held three times this year. Tentative dates are April, August, and December. Each event will need around 21 volunteers. If you'd like to help, go to our website and sign up at [jeremiahdevelopment.org](http://jeremiahdevelopment.org). Volunteers are needed to:
  - Register attendees (3 people)
  - Register vendors and be their contact person during the event (2 person)
  - Set -up for the event (2 people)
  - Knock down after the event (4 people)
  - Distribute food (4 people)
  - Traffic control - parking (2 people)
  - Floaters to fill in where needed (2 people)
  - Greeter/Helper (2 people)
- » Goodwill Industries has agreed to sponsor our neighborhood events again this year! This will help fund safety nights, leadership meetings, movies in the park, and any other events we will have for the neighborhood.
- » As of this writing, JD is currently working towards a partnership with Molina Health for our newsletter sponsorship and scholarships for our small engine program.
- » The board of Jeremiah Development has begun the process of developing a strategic plan for the next few years. We will be meeting with neighbors, volunteers, and others interested in the future of the organization in small focus groups to help guide our planning. If you are interested in participating in one of these groups, please let us know.
- » Keep an eye on our website, [jeremiahdevelopment.org](http://jeremiahdevelopment.org) and Facebook page for upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.



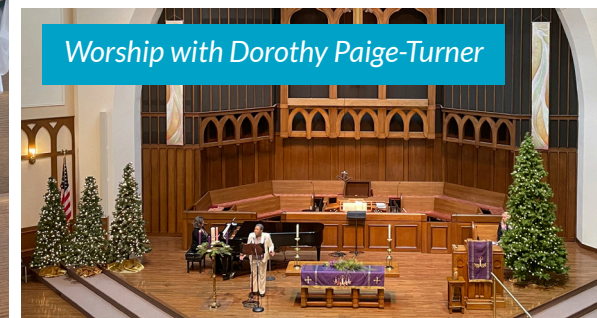
Festive display window



(back) Bill Hoff as the bright star.  
(front) Abigail and Madeline as angels. Christmas Pagaent 2022.



Lobby Bells



Worship with Dorothy Paige-Turner

# JANUARY CALENDAR

**Sunday, Jan. 1**  
 No Communion  
 Pulpit Talk Jim Ozee  
 8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

**Monday, Jan 2**  
 No Serious Soup

**Tuesday, Jan 3**  
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
 No Thrift Store  
 No DVT

**Wednesday, Jan 4**  
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 4:30 PM – New Zion in Gym

**Thursday, Jan 5**  
 9:30 AM Carillons  
 No Hospitality Team  
 7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

**Friday, Jan 6**  
 No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, Jan 7**  
 9:00 AM – AGO  
 9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic  
 9:00 AM – Set up dining room

**Sunday, Jan 8**  
 Tenth Anniversary Federation  
 Communion  
 8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store  
 11:15 AM – Coffee Hour Brunch in  
 Dining Room

**Monday, Jan 9**  
 11:30 AM - Serious Soup-Blood  
 Pressure Check  
 5:00 PM – Deacons Fellowship  
 Ministry

**Tuesday, Jan 10**  
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Store  
 5:00 PM – Adult Ed

**Wednesday, Jan 11**  
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 4:30 PM – New Zion in Gym

**Thursday, Jan 12**  
 9:30 AM – Carillons  
 7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

**Friday, Jan 13**  
 No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, Jan 14**  
 No Scheduled Activities

**Sunday, Jan 15**  
 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

**Monday, Jan 16**  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

**Tuesday, Jan 17**  
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Store  
 5:30 PM – Missions Ministry

**Wednesday, Jan 18**  
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 4:30 PM – New Zion in Gym  
 5:30 PM – Trustees

**Thursday, Jan 19**  
 9:30 AM – Carillons  
 7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

**Friday, Jan 20**  
 No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, Jan 21**  
 9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic  
 10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen

**Sunday, Jan 22** Norm Shirk  
 String Band  
 8:30 AM – Coffee Class  
 10:00 AM – Worship Service  
 10:20 AM – Sunday School  
 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

**Monday, Jan 23**  
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup  
 6:30 PM – Worship/Music Team

**Tuesday, Jan 24**  
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast  
 9:00 AM – Thrift Store

**Wednesday, Jan 25**  
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
 4:30 PM – New Zion in Gym

**Thursday, Jan 26**  
 9:30 AM – Carillons  
 12:00 PM – JD Executive  
 5:30 PM - Governing Council  
 6:00 PM – Safe Places  
 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

**Friday, Jan 27**  
 No Scheduled Activities

**Saturday, Jan 28**  
 No Scheduled Activities

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

**Monday, Jan 30**  
 11:30 AM - Serious Soup

**Tuesday, Jan 31**  
 12:00 PM – Bible Study

## CROP WALKERS RAISE \$8,000 FOR LOCAL PANTRIES

The Rockford CROP Hunger Walkers raised approximately \$32,000 last year. Among them were Bob Saunders and Janet Hendricks who together raised at least \$6,000 of this amount. This provided about \$8,000 to the Greater Rockford Pantry Coalition. It’s member pantries have fed nearly twice the number of people in 2022 than used their services in 2021. Thanks, everyone, who made contributions to Janet. She raised nearly \$1,200.



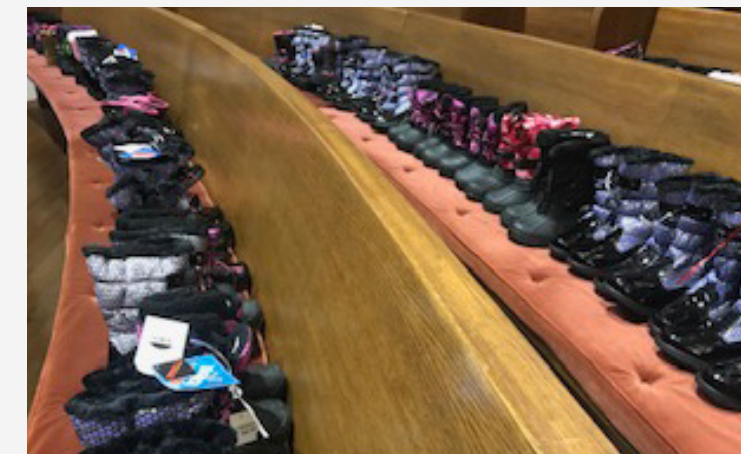
## SOUP KITCHEN 2023

**Saturday, January 21**  
 Our first date to serve lunch at the Jubilee Center is Saturday, January 21. It’s closer than you think! If you are able to join the team that day, let Marge Maynard know. If you have a friend that you’d like to bring along, we would love it! The dates for the rest of the year are as follows: March 4, May 13, July 29, September 16 and November 25. Mark your calendar now!

## COFFEE CLASS

- » **January 8th** - Advent Series, Part 3, “Peace for God’s People” – Presenter TBD
- » **January 15th** – Advent Series, Part 4, “Peace for God’s People” – Presenter TBD
- » **January 22nd** – Study of the Parables – Jim Ozee (see below) or “Surprised by Hope”
- » **January 29th** – “Topic of the Day”, rather than “Wired Word” will be discussed. We’ll use a newsworthy topic that’s taken place within recent days and utilize it for the class discussion.
- » **February 5th** - Study of the Parables – Jim Ozee or “Surprised by Hope” – Jim Ozee
- » **February 12th** – Study of the Parables – Jim Ozee or “Surprised by Hope” – Jim Ozee
- » **February 19th** – “The Jesus Seminar” – Bob Bates Jan. meeting

## THANK YOU NOTES FROM HASKELL SCHOOL CHILDREN



*“Dear Second First Church  
 Thank you for the boots. I love my new snow boots. They are so fuzzy, cute, and great! I also love the color. I’m very thankful for the boots. These were a special gift. This is not your first time giving our Haskell community some boots. Some people aren’t as fortunate as the next person. So thank you, Second First Church. Love:Ameera”*

*“Thank you Thank you  
 Dear Second First Church  
 Thank you very much for getting our school these special boots. You guys are very blessed. I am very thankful for my boots. I love the boots you picked for me. They are very cozy. They have snowflakes. They are my favorite color. That is why I love them so much. I am very thankful that you guys got us some new boots for winter because I know some people dont’ have any boots for this winter so that’s why I am very happy that you got some boots for out school. To the Second First Church From Della. C.”*

*“Dear 2nd/1st Church members,  
 Thank you for the boots. I love them so much and they are so perfect for my size. I really like them a lot. They are very pretty. I really like the color and I can’t wait to wear them when it snow and I love the color pink blue and they wear so so cool. Your Friend, Sharon at Haskell”*

*“Dear 2nd/1st Church member  
 Thank you so much for the winter boots. I am thankful for your awesome kind community and sending these boots to our Haskell community. I can’t wait to use these boots and play outside with your communitys kindness. Your local friend, Priscilla”*

*“Dear 2nd/1st Church,  
 Thank you for the winter boots. I LOVE THE BOOTS!!! I will were them everyday even if there is no snow. You are the best community. Your friend, Henri”*

## UPCOMING worship schedule

JANUARY 8: Becky Erbe  
 JANUARY 15: Becky Erbe  
 JANUARY 22: Norm Shirk  
 JANUARY 29: Becky Erbe



## FAIR TRADE STORE

The Fair Trade Store brought us many wonderful holiday gifts and treats. It will be open every week for the month of January. Beginning February 1st, it will only be open the FIRST Sunday of each month.

## A NOTE FROM OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY COORDINATOR

By Aubrey Barnett

Burr... it's that time of year!

Well as the long winter settles in and we let go of some of the holiday business, we are ready to settle into some old and new routines too!

### Communion Snack Day

Some of you may remember this, but it is truly taking shape so I want to reiterate a key practice in our children's community. As a way of helping the youngest children remember and consider the meaning of communion, every first of the month in our class before we receive the host with the community, we have a special delicious treat. We talk about what communion day is about, retell the story of the last supper, and practice praying the Lord's Prayer aloud. I admit, it made my heart skip a beat when one of my own little ones this month asked before service, "Wait, is today communion Sunday?" It was a recognition of the season and ritual worship community, in a world of constant change and augmented personalized individual realities. This will still happen each first Sunday of the month!



### Crayon Cross Art

We continue to honor and work on our space by creating works of art! Last month we had the chance to display the crayon cross art that we made in class over the course of several weeks. It was truly beautiful to see in the worship space and we are looking for a final spot to hang it, suggestions are welcome! The children working together and having to collaborate in ways to make the final product is the kind of experience we can give them as young people to help them learn the ways of Christ, listening to others and valuing their input and experiences as we make a rainbow filled world!

### Illustrated Ministries Resources

We are always looking for ways to engage the children and beautify the community, and we want to add to our colored wall art upstairs with a new poster from Illustrated Ministries. After some voting we plan on doing a series from Mary's Song. Look for pictures in the upcoming newsletters.

### Safe Space

We will have our first young adult youth group on Jan 26th at 7 pm. This is a group meant for students 17 and above. It is aimed at reengaging our oldest youth and finding ways to promote happiness and wellness as they launch into their adult lives. Students are encouraged to bring friends who might not normally come to church, light refreshments will be served.



### Pop Up Pageant

The pageant was a success again thanks to the many who participated! Ms. Rachel and her husband made a lovely Mary and Joseph. Thank you to Alice Uphouse for preparing, organizing, cleaning, and managing the costumes. The children were happy to participate and the joyful word was celebrated by all.

### iFLY

There is a rumor that we will be doing indoor skydiving in February. Start bugging Ms. Rachel to know more!



Many hands and helpers worked together to help feed the hungry during December. Thank you for your generous gift of time and talent.