

SecondFirst Church

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

Welcome February!

We all understand 'hump day,' Wednesday, the middle of the week. That is how I feel about February. It is the middle month of winter. It still can be cold, it still can be snowy, but the month is short and you know Spring is not too far off.

This February will be a busy one here at SecondFirst. As you continue to read this publication you will read about all the activities from a special coffee hour, to the youth group events, and the start of Lent. There is something for everyone this month.

This month we will have the pleasure of having Norm Shirk with us twice, February 12, and 26. It is such a pleasure to have him in worship. Ash Wednesday is February 22. We will have a Taizé-style Ash Wednesday worship with the imposition of ashes. The service begins at 6:30 pm. A soup dinner will be offered at 6:00 pm in the dining room.

Let us all enjoy the 'hump month.' February has many blessings, whether you enjoy them from your warm living room, or outside tubing, or sledding or maybe from some place warm with a sandy beach. And if you think, "Becky, you're crazy. February is cold and awful!" Remember pitchers and catchers report to spring training the week of February 18! Spring will be here soon!

UPCOMING LENTEN EXPERIENCES

Lenten Study: Every Tuesday (starting February 21) at 12:00 pm

Hard to Dance with the Devil on Your Back

Ash Wednesday Service: February 22 at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary

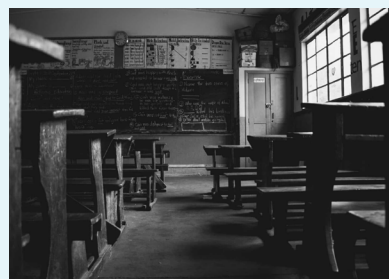
Soup Dinners: Every Wednesday (starting February 22) at 6:00 pm in the Dining Room

Lenten Worship Experience: Every Wednesday (starting March 1) at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary

The Grace of Les Misérables

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 'BECOMING FREEDOM SCHOOLS': BLACK HISTORY MONTH RESOURCES INVITE ALL AGES TOWARD RACIAL JUSTICE



As Black History Month approaches, Join the Movement Toward Racial Justice is encouraging folks to take a lesson from the 1960s Freedom Schools. Developed by

the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the summer of 1964, Freedom Schools created summer education programs for young Black Mississippians. Hundreds of volunteers taught more than 3,000 young students a curriculum designed to empower young people and build their political consciousness in the context of the civil rights movement. "What would it look like for us to join together in that kind of intergenerational way that the Freedom Schools represented in that summer?" **Read more: www.ucc.org**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION'S MYANMAR WEBINAR SERIES RESUMES

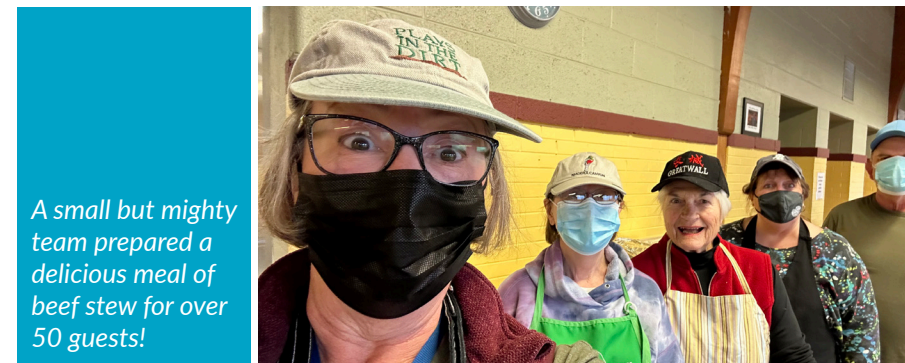


The second installment of a video/webinar series highlighting the Christian mission in Myanmar (formerly Burma) resumes at 6 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday. An ecumenical prayer service commemorating the violent regime change in

2021 will broadcast live on the World Mission Facebook page. The prayer service will include classical Burmese music, hymns and readings in Burmese from Isaiah 25 and Romans 5. There will also be a chain of prayers towards the end of the service and viewers can pray on any subject of their choice. According to Hery Ramambasoa, World Mission's area coordinator for Asia and the Pacific, violence continues in some regions of Myanmar, causing thousands to flee their homes, disrupting normal activities, and restricting freedom of movement and expression. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**



Pastor Becky teaches the moral of the "Stone Soup" story: Sharing benefits everyone who contributes.



A small but mighty team prepared a delicious meal of beef stew for over 50 guests!



Our 10th Anniversary celebration was a great success! More photos on page 5 »

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

By Phil Davidson

February is a month full of special days and events. We express our love to those special to us on Valentine's Day, February 14. We observe the birthdays of all our presidents on Presidents Day, February 20. The wonderful heritage and traditions of African Americans are celebrated during Black History Month. Many of us gather together in the warmth of our homes in front of the big screen TV to watch the best of the NFL in the Super Bowl (and consume way too much snack food). And, of course, Ash Wednesday is on February 22, kicking off the 40 days of Lent, a period to reflect and prepare for the Resurrection of our Lord.

I would like to add one more observance to February. Let's call it Second First Ministry Teams Recognition Month. Our ministry teams do an amazing job. If you are currently serving on a team, thank you. We are so appreciative of those who have stepped forward to serve. However, we are looking for additional enthusiastic people to share their gifts and talents. Team membership builds lasting friendships, provides a stronger sense of belonging, and gives the feeling of accomplishment. Any member of the Nominating Team will be happy to talk to you and answer your questions (Darlene Riddle, Marge Maynard, Diane Pippel, Doug Phillips, Holly Hegge, Jean Herro, Arlene Noel, Ann Stites), or you can reach out to me.

In order to make attendance at team meetings more convenient, a majority of the teams meet on Zoom or hold hybrid meetings which give you the flexibility of being there in person or online. Please consider volunteering to serve on a team or suggest someone who would be a good addition to our teams. Thank you.

GOVERNING COUNCIL RECAP

by Darlene Riddle

A short Governing Council meeting was held Thursday, January 26th. The proposed budget from Trustees was considered and approved to present to the congregation for a vote on February 5th at the Annual Budget and Foundation meeting. We will begin the budget process earlier this year so a budget can be passed in November. Currently, when paying bills and payroll in January, we are doing so without an approved budget. Changing the date will require a bylaw change. Each team should look at the current bylaws to see if any changes need to occur since they were approved in 2017. Now is the time to submit proposed changes so they can be included for a vote at the annual meeting.

The new search committee for a senior pastor was also approved. Members are Steve Muntz, Greg Makulec, Sarah Reinold, Jay Baker, Mary Spindler and Madeline Archer. The Moderator and Vice Moderator will be included, and Marge Maynard has agreed to serve as a consultant. The next task is to work on and complete our church profile to present to potential applicants.

The annual meeting has been scheduled for April 30th. Typically this meeting occurs the first Sunday in May, so this also will be a bylaw change proposal.

LENTEN STUDY

Tuesdays Starting February 21, 12:00 pm (via Zoom)

A Lenten study led by Pastor Becky featuring, "Hard to Dance with the Devil on Your Back". Sometimes in life it is difficult to dance during trials and tribulations. To have faith is to find the strength and endurance to Dance.

Let us together find the passion to dance again. There is some homework before each class. Email Pastor Becky if you are interested in attending. We send out materials prior to the class.

FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

SecondFirst hosted Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza on January 7th. This is an event put on by the American Guild of Organists and is intended for young piano students to have an opportunity to learn and explore the King of Instruments. Eleven area students ranging in age from 6 to 12 participated. We watched a fun video about the organ at Fourth Presbyterian in Chicago (which boasts the largest organ in Chicago). Adam Singleton, organist at St. Peter's Cathedral, demonstrated our organ, and then helped each student play a piece. Then we had pizza and lots of conversation afterwards. It was a great morning, and I'd like to thank the church for allowing us to host this very successful event.

KFACT UPDATES

As we have entered a new year KFACT is focused on our Vision for 2023!

We continue to hold bi-weekly groups at our RPS205 middle schools, and the girls were so excited to create vision boards about what they want to see in their futures. They focused on positivity including self-care, confidence, health, wealth, lifestyle, and happiness.

KFACT had planned a holiday party for late December but unfortunately, we had to cancel the event due to blizzard warnings. We offered to reschedule the party for January, but our girls have chosen to serve the community instead. On January 17th KFACT girls will be doing a Labor of Love at the Overnight Café by feeding the homeless population. Several of our girls have received gifts sponsored by KFACT to provide necessities and make their holidays brighter and they want to pay it forward. What an amazing gesture.



Opportunity for Giving: OGHS

SUNDAY, MARCH 19

We will be accepting an offering to support One Great Hour of Sharing, commonly called OGHS. The funds raised support activities in disaster relief and refugee relief, both in the US and around the world.

How to Give: Use the special envelope or make a check out to the church and write OGHS in the memo line. The world thanks you!



PULPIT TALKS

Do you have a story to tell?

Do you have a story to tell? Do you have a faith 'aha moment' that you would be willing to share? Pulpit Talks have gone over very well and we hope to have more people willing to give their story. Give Pastor Becky a call if interested.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Wednesday, Feb 1

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 2

No Hospitality Team
5:30 PM – JD Board Meeting
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 3

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb 4

9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, Feb. 5

Annual Budget Meeting
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store
11:15 AM – Budget Meeting

Monday, Feb. 6

11:30 am – Serious Soup

Tuesday, Feb. 7

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
5:30 PM – Presbytery Meeting
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, Feb. 8

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb. 9

9:30 AM – Carillons
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb. 10

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb. 11

12:00 PM – RUM Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 12 Norm Shirk

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Coffee Hour with Brownies
11:15 AM – Family CE
2:00 PM – Gun Violence Forum

Monday, Feb 13

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:00 PM – Deacons/Fellowship

Tuesday, Feb. 14

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
5:00 PM – Adult Ed Team

Wednesday, Feb. 15

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Trustees Ministry
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, Feb 16

9:30 AM – Carillons
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb. 17

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb. 18

9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, Feb. 19

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Valentine Bake Off

Monday, Feb. 20

No Serious Soup

Tuesday, Feb. 21

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
12:00 PM – Lenten Study
5:30 PM – Missions Ministry

Wednesday, Feb 22

Ash Wednesday
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Soup Dinner
6:30 PM – Lenten Worship Experience

Thursday, Feb. 23

9:30 AM – Carillons
5:30 PM – Governing Council
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb. 24

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Feb. 25

1:00 PM – Youth Medieval Times

Sunday, Feb. 26 Norm Shirk

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, Feb. 27

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
6:30 PM – Worship/Music Team

Tuesday, Feb. 28

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
12:00 PM – Lenten Study



TUBING AT ALPINE HILLS

Sunday, February 5, 12:00-1:30 pm

SecondFirst Families! We are excited to be planning another fun day of tubing at Alpine Hills Snow Park, but before we can secure our date and time slot, we need to know how many people will be joining us. We are looking at the 12:00-1:30 time slot on Sunday, February 5th. Please email Jess Lindblade at (jessie0361@aol.com) or text her at (847) 312-6721, as soon as possible, if you plan to attend so we can get a headcount and reserve our time. The cost will be covered by the Church and we will purchase the tickets in advance for the group. Spots go fast, so don't miss out. It was an absolute blast last year!



COFFEE & BROWNIES

Sunday, February 12, After Worship

Join the Deacons Fellowship team Sunday, Feb, 12 after church for coffee, brownies and visiting with your church buddies.

GUN VIOLENCE FORUM

Sunday, February 12, 2:00-4:00 pm in the Sanctuary

“How we are Failing Our Youth”. In the second forum by the LWVG addressing Gun Violence Prevention, the focus will be on how to keep our children away from the culture of gun violence. Data from many different groups emphasize that we need to intervene to prevent our children from turning to guns to settle problems and join gangs that appear to offer them status and a sense of belonging.

Please attend this forum which will be held here at SecondFirst from 2 -4 PM. Learn about some of the programs taking place between the School District and various Community Organizations including Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and others. We will also hear from Rockford School Superintendent Ehren Jarret.



VALENTINE BAKE-OFF

Sunday, February 19, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Easy-Bake Oven treats, cookie decorating, crafts, fun, and fellowship! This event will be held in the dining room. RSVP to aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org.

YOUTH MEDIEVAL TIMES

Saturday, February 25

Meet at the Church 11:15 am, Show starts 1:00 pm

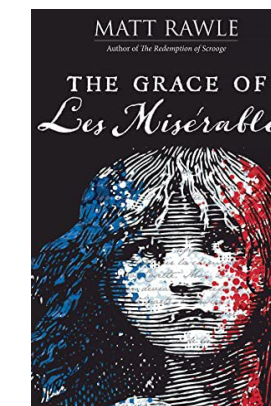
Our older youth will be taking a field trip to Medieval Times. This trip is taking place at our annual Snow Camp which was not able to happen this year. While we are sad to miss a tradition that we hope to have again, this new experience is going to be wonderful as well. Many of the younger adolescents have never been to Medieval Times and we look forward to experiencing things with “new eyes”. If you know a youth from ages 10-17 who might want to come along, contact Rachel or Aubrey. Look for updates and pictures in the March newsletter!

COFFEE CLASS

- » **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
- » **February 26th** – “Topic of the Day” or possibly Daniel Olson will lead a class tbd

THE GRACE OF LES MISÉRABLES

Beginning Wednesday, March 1, 6:00 pm



Whether you have actually read the 1,462 pages of the novel, seen the Broadway musical, listened to the soundtrack or watched one of the several screen adaptations you already know the power of the story. Through a video series from Matt Rawle, this 6-week Lenten Experience dives into six themes found in the story- grace, justice, poverty, revolution, love, and hope- each represented by a character in Hugo’s story and our Christian calling.

This Lenten Experience begins Wednesday, March 1, so you have plenty of time to get caught up with the story. Join us at 6:00 pm for a soup dinner or come to just the class which begins at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary. Call the office or Pastor Becky if you would like to attend.

UPCOMING worship schedule

FEBRUARY 5: Becky Erbe

FEBRUARY 12: Nork Shirk

FEBRUARY 19: Becky Erbe

FEBRUARY 26: Norm Shirk



UPCOMING MUSIC

Music in February will be choir, and in March we will hear handbells.

- » Feb 5: Sanctuary Choir
- » Feb 12: Sanctuary Choir
- » Feb 19: Sanctuary Choir
- » Feb 26: TBA
- » March 5: Sanctuary Choir
- » March 12: Bells
- » March 19: Julie Cook-Ramirez, guitar

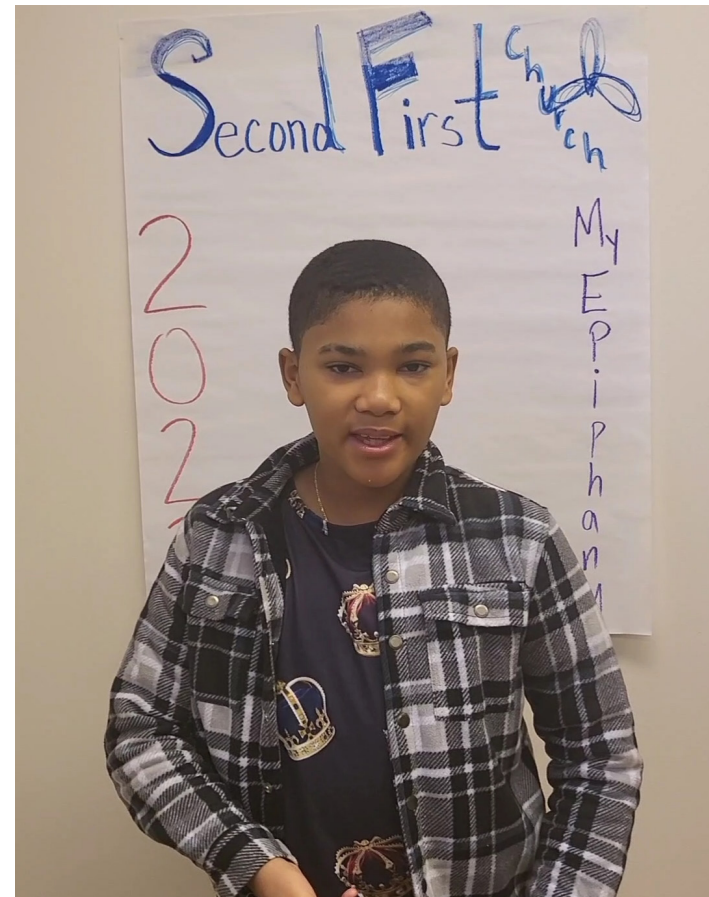
A NOTE FROM OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY COORDINATOR

By Aubrey Barnett

The children's team has launched a truly wonderful 2023. We are busy planning for many more upcoming events but here are the highlights:

WELCOME BEFORE WORSHIP

We are going to try and have different children welcome each week, with a specific reflective question on faith. We hope to capture some of these digitally and share them on our Facebook page as a connection for our greater community. If you are coming in, please take the risk to talk to the kids, and if you are online look out for our posts!



Josanny speaking to his 2023 Epiphany on God's work.

WALL ART

We finally hung our cross artwork in its forever home. Miss Sarah once again was the hero putting the nails and hanging the canvas. We are looking to create two more pieces in class with different artistic mediums. Keep an eye out for the new beautiful works and be sure to stop by to see them in person on the 3rd floor!



STONE SOUP

The last Sunday in January the youth stayed after church to cook a meal for our overnight cafe guests. Pastor Becky kept the Stone Soup tradition alive, and the children then worked together to make a meal of love for those in need.



MODERN DAY CHRISTIANITY FOR KIDS

I thought it might be nice to do a small reflection, more than usual for my write ups. As a still growing professional who has spent the last decade working in the field with children and teens across contexts, I have come to feel that trying to raise a child with wonder, awe, and spirituality is no easy task these days. Perhaps the whole point of studying the past is to remind us that it never has been.

To parent a child in the ways of God is to struggle with the painful parts of life both inside our own mistakes and failings, and in those we see in the world. To parents a child in the ways of Christ is to try and help them hold onto and believe that goodness does indeed win, even though it appears otherwise. With social media invading every aspect of life, when mudslides in California, and deaths in the middle east are all a click away, and the facts of existence only become more and more complicated with each new universe we might discover- our children have a right to push back and ask about the proof of this existence of a divine being that seems to live so little physical evidence for us to follow. To teach them in the ways of the spirit, when technology feels so much easier, it is a difficult road ahead. I ask for your continued prayers, feedback, and discussion. I try each day to infuse my role with every child I encounter, with a sense of hope, love, and value, and a childlike faith in the things I cannot see. I am always in benefit of prayers to that end. Be blessed, be well, know that love truly does win.



10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF OUR FEDERATION

Many helpful hands worked to make our 10th Anniversary celebration a special time. Big thanks to everyone who contributed to this milestone event.