

SecondFirst Church

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

APRIL 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

Think of a moment when someone that you least expected to see suddenly stands before you. A moment when something you'd lost is found again and you can scarcely believe your eyes.

Think of a moment when your fear was suddenly proved unfounded and you were surprised by joy.

This is such a moment. We resign ourselves to the worst, and suddenly life turns around.

So come this Easter, to be shaken from your conviction that nothing can change your situation.

Come if you look at the world and feel overwhelmed by its chaos, or disillusioned by its promises.

In this moment we remember how Mary went to anoint a corpse, and was greeted by a Savior.

Come to worship prepared to see your life and the world through new eyes.

For Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

Creatively adapted from Ann Siddall, and posted on the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre website. <https://stillpointsa.org.au/>

Let us repeat that one more time!

Christ is Risen, He has risen indeed.



HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Holy Week is the most sacred week in the liturgical year in Christianity. Holy Week honors the week that changed the world. From Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday, there were many events that are vital to our faith. The most important events in Christianity are the death and later Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On Good Friday, we mourn the death of our Savior. On Easter Sunday, we joyously celebrate His triumph over death.

Palm/Passion Sunday

» Sunday, April 2, 10:00 am

Maundy Thursday Service

» Thursday, April 6, 6:30 pm

Good Friday Prayer Service

» Friday, April 7, 12:00 pm

Easter Celebration

» Sunday, April 9, 10:00 am

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SYNOD IS ASKED TO AFFIRM COMMITMENT TO TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY DIGNITY AMID LEGISLATIVE ATTACKS



When the state of Alabama passed a law to criminalize the provision of gender-affirming healthcare to youth in April 2022, punishable as a felony with prison time, it was the

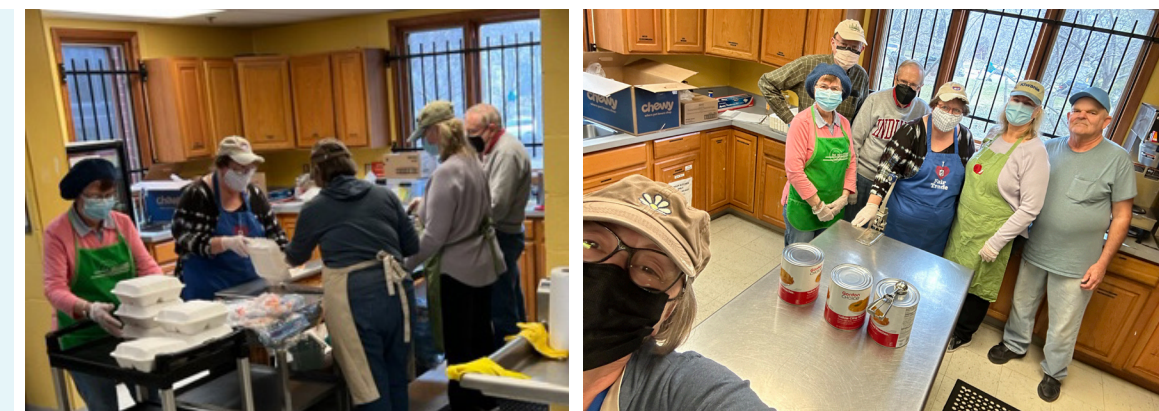
first of its kind. The Rev. Paul Eknes-Tucker, pastor of Pilgrim Church UCC in Birmingham, Ala., joined a group of parents and medical providers in the state to file a lawsuit against it, and a judge blocked its enforcement while the case proceeds. "This dangerous law is an unthinkable infringement on parental rights and the freedom of pastors and other faith leaders to counsel their own parishioners. This law is destructive not only to families in Alabama, but to the freedoms and values Alabamians hold dear," Eknes-Tucker said. **Read more:** www.ucc.org

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) IS RESPONDING TO CYCLONE FREDDY



The Presbyterian Mission Agency is reaching out to its partners in southern Africa, where powerful Cyclone Freddy has struck multiple times, leaving hundreds of people dead. Assistance includes a solidarity grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to help

provide humanitarian aid to those affected by Freddy, which holds the record for most accumulated cyclone energy of any storm in the southern hemisphere and possibly worldwide, according to Reuters. The storm has killed more than 400 people in Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar since it first made landfall in Africa in late February and then hit the region again last weekend, Reuters noted. It also has triggered flooding and landslides and flattened homes. **Read more:** presbyterianmission.org



Pictured here is the Jubilee Soup Kitchen Crew. The next opportunity to serve lunch at the Saturday Neighborhood Soup Kitchen at the Jubilee Center is May 13th.

Learn more on page 3.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

By Phil Davidson

When our Church sets out to do something, we do it! Congratulations to Darlene Riddle and the Nominating Ministry Team for fully manning our ministry teams for the coming year. And, a special thank you to all of you who stepped up to be part of those important teams. But, remember, if you are not on a team, you can still help with team projects. That is particularly true for the Hospitality Team when they are called upon to prepare for special occasions.

Speaking of “teamwork,” what will many of us do this spring (besides breathing a sigh of relief that we made it through another winter)? I suspect the answer is to venture out into the yard for the first time in months, pick up branches, rake leaves and clean out flower beds, and lay down mulch (or, we have someone else do that for us). Guess what? The same thing happens here at SecondFirst Church in the spring. Ron Schaad and his crew do a marvelous job beautifying the outside of our fabulous building. So, when Ron asks for assistance soon, please answer the call if you are able.

Of course, spring is also a time when we experience a rollercoaster ride of emotions in our spiritual life. Palm Sunday observes the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, being greeted by people waving palm branches. It is a reminder of the welcoming of Jesus into our hearts and of our willingness to follow him. But, it is also a reminder that he will soon be crucified. Then, we move to Maundy Thursday, a somber day in Christianity, followed by Good Friday, the commemoration of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This all culminates in the joyous celebration of the resurrection of our Savior on Easter Sunday. It is truly a story with a happy ending.

Spring is also a time of transition at SecondFirst Church. Our new year begins on May 1. The annual meeting is scheduled on April 30, following the church service. If you are able, please plan to attend in person or online. That will be my last day as moderator with Darlene Riddle taking over the position on May 1. It has been an honor and privilege serving as your moderator. Thank you for all the help and encouragement from the staff, lay leaders, and the congregation. Despite some challenges, it has been a wonderful year.

Transition is good. As Roy Cooper says, “Transitions are a time of reflection, and a time for looking forward.”

RING IN SPRING

Sunday, April 23, 4:00 pm

Spring has sprung — and you know what that means! Our annual Ring in Spring concert is just around the corner. Get ready for an afternoon of music and mission as our handbell/handchime ensembles present an array of enjoyable selections. Carillons have prepared several bell standards, including “Plink, Plank, Plunk” and “The Syncopated Clock,” and our adorable Peanuts will ring Kermit the Frog’s classic “The Rainbow Connection.” The Martin Ringers and Bellcantos sets are centered around pop/rock and showtunes, including “Yesterday,” “A Million Dreams,” “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” “Rolling in the Deep,” “My Favorite Things,” “Bohemian Rhapsody,” and more!

This year’s concert will benefit Get Connected, a local organization dedicated to helping high-risk individuals impacted by incarceration



re-enter the community successfully and self-sustainably. You can learn more about their mission at getconnectedtoo815.org

Please join us as we gather on Sunday, April 23 to enjoy some great tunes and learn more about Get Connected.

HAITI PROJECT: BUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY IN SAUT-D’EAU HAITI THROUGH A FOCUS ON DEVELOPING FOOD SECURITY

By Roger Greenlaw

The people of Saut-d’Eau, Haiti (Casimir’s hometown) have had little or no steady source of income. Each day they seek enough odd jobs to buy enough food for a day. A roof over their heads and education for their children are often out of reach.

Our work with the James Casimir family over the past 5 years to help create a thriving community in the area of food security is having such growing success that we are ready to go to the next level. With Haiti’s 3 growing seasons, the families who received our donations of Garden Tools and Heritage Seeds now have abundant food. They can now use their extra produce to buy other things they need in the local market. Their extra corn and rice, however, need to be ground into cornmeal and rice flour at a grain mill.

As we reported last year, the only available grain mill is over an hour away. The transportation costs and Mill fees \$ take about 40% of the value of a family’s extra corn and rice. We have been developing construction plans for a Local (Non-profit) Co-op Grain Mill in Saut-d’Eau, so this would eliminate transportation costs and minimize fees, allowing families to sell their extra cornmeal and rice flour in their local market and buy other needed supplies. To that end, we have already received \$10,000 to buy the Milling Machine and have developed building plans for \$28,000 (est.) cinder block building to house the Mill. We will continue raising money toward that goal.

Our Tools and Seeds program supported by this grain mill will contribute to a developing local economy as it allows gardeners to sell their extra crops and buy what they need from other neighbors at their local market.

James and Odette have just returned from 6 weeks in Haiti and report that the greatest request from their community is again, more garden tools for families in the surrounding areas of Saut-d’Eau. Therefore, this April & May, we will again be asking our SecondFirst Church Family for donations to support buying more Garden Tools & Heritage Seeds.

Watch for more details about the April/May/June planting season. Send your ideas and questions to:

Roger & Carolyn Greenlaw
Email rgreen97@aol.com
Cell 815-262-1776

James & Odette Casimir
Email casimir0401@gmail.com
Cell 815-319-0741



Examples of grain milling machines



A simple cinder block building



James handing out tools



Heritage bean seeds



Casimir’s team in Saut-d’Eau



Corn crop



SecondFirst Church Haiti Interest Group Meeting

APRIL CALENDAR

Saturday, April 1
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Palm Sunday, April 2 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 Lemon Bars

Monday, April 3
11:30 Serious Soup

Tuesday, April 4
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store
12:00 PM – Lenten Study
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, April 5
10:00 AM – Staff
6:00 PM – Soup
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers
6:30 PM – Lenten Worship

Maundy Thursday, April 6
9:30 AM – Carillons
No Hospitality Team
6:30 PM – Maundy Service
7:30 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Good Friday, April 7
12:00 PM – Good Friday Service

Saturday, April 8
No Scheduled Activities

Easter Sunday, April 9
No Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, April 10 Office Closed
5:00 PM – Deacons Fellowship
Ministry

Tuesday, April 11
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store
5:00 PM – Adult Ed

Wednesday, April 12
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, April 13
9:30 AM – Carillons
1:00 PM – Called to Care
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, April 14
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, April 15
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, April 16
Jim Ozee and Bells
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Family CE

Monday, April 17
11:30 AM - Serious Soup

Tuesday, April 18
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store
5:30 PM – Missions Ministry

Wednesday, April 19
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Trustees
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 20
9:30 AM – Carillons
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, April 21
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, April 22
10:00 AM – Bells Rehearse

Sunday, April 23
Marge Maynard
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
4:00 PM – Ring In Spring

Monday, April 24
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
6:30 PM – Worship/Music Team

Tuesday, April 25
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store

Wednesday, April 26
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, April 27
9:30 AM – Carillons
12:00 PM – JD Executive
5:30 PM – Governing Council
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday April 28
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, April 29
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, April 30 Bells
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Annual Program Meeting

JUBILEE SOUP KITCHEN

Saturday, May 13, 10:00 am

Our next opportunity to serve lunch at the Saturday Neighborhood Soup Kitchen at the Jubilee Center is fast approaching! As usual we will work from 10 am to about 1 pm, we need team members whether seasoned or first-timers, and you can help for whatever amount of time works for you—just come to the door off the parking lot at Emmanuel Episcopal and we’ll take it from there. What to bring: a hat to cover your hair, a mask, and an apron if you’d like one. Jean Herro or Marge Maynard with questions or to volunteer.

ADULT COFFEE CLASS

Sundays, 8:30 am

April 2: “Lent Is Not Rocket Science” – Jim Ozee or volunteer

April 9: EASTER [No Coffee Class]

April 16: “Abiding in Christ” series – Lenore Lund or Jim Ozee

April 23: “Abiding in Christ” series – Jim Ozee

April 30: Open Mic - Topic to be determined

SELF-DEFENSE SEMINAR

Wednesday, April 26, 6:00-7:30 pm

Learn self-defense tips from a trained Law Enforcement Officer. This seminar will take place from 6:00-7:30 pm in the gym. Sign-in begins at 5:30 pm

This interactive seminar will provide introductory information on how to protect yourself from possible assailants. Sponsored by State Representative Maurice West.



ANNUAL MEETING & THANK YOU

Our Annual Meeting is April 30. On this day we say thank you to those joining ministry teams and those who have ending their time on a ministry team. Thank you to all who have served this year.

A big thank you goes to Phil Davidson, our Church Moderator. We are going to really miss the dad jokes and National Whatever Day it is. The Moderator is a tough job. Thank you Phil, for everything!

KFACT UPDATE

KFACT is so proud of Daebreon Leach!

LeMoyné Owen College, Criminal Justice, 2022



“KFACT has impacted my life in many different ways but one that will always stick out to me is that during my process of applying to college they never gave up on me they worked with me even when I didn’t have faith in myself on being accepted into college” -Deabreon Leach

KFACT has had a busy first quarter! We were privileged to be chosen by Rockford Chamber’s Leadership Rockford as their annual community project.

Leadership Rockford spearheaded two successful fundraising events to support KFACT. The first was Dine and Donate Night at Portillo’s, followed by a virtual Empowering Girls Together Fundraiser that ran from 3/17-3/31 followed by a drawing on April 1st. Thanks to our generous donors, we had some INCREDIBLE things to give away, including a one-night stay at the gorgeous Embassy Suites in downtown Rockford, tickets to multiple shows at the Coronado Theater, kayak rentals, and more!



ANNUAL PROGRAM MEETING

Our Annual Program Meeting of Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church will be held Sunday, April 30, 11:15 am, in person or via Zoom.



A NOTE FROM OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY COORDINATOR

By Aubrey Barnett

We are so excited to be in the Easter season, the busy boxes have been changed to reflect our excitement about the coming resurrection! The children continue to grow in their love of our puppet collection, regularly wanting to create their own plays, we made sure each kiddo had a SecondFirst savings jar for offerings, and we continue to decorate our space with art made about God's goodness. Miss Tete in the nursery has been hard at work organizing our very extensive Lego collection, stop by and check it out sometime!

We are gearing up and putting the final plans on our Kids Love Summer Camp! Look for the official flier. The camp will be Monday July 11 to Thursday July 14 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm each day. We will have crafts, water games, favorite TV show and movie characters, and of course lessons about the spirit! If you know any kids who may be interested send me an email.

We will be painting the signs for our sunflower garden in May, and we look forward to beautifying our space this coming spring! Look for details in the bulletin.

Finally, we have started a youth series on our Facebook page. Each week we will have the youth ask members of the congregation a specific spiritual question, and then we will be sharing their answers. We hope this brings the community together, sharing a bit more about who each of us is as a follower of Christ. Check out Facebook for the videos each week, and look for us before church for an interview!



MUSIC NOTES

By Valerie Blair

How fortunate we are to have Madeline Archer in our midst. I, Valerie, asked, with only a week's notice, if she would play flute on the choir Anthem on March 19th. She said sure, as she usually does. She probably had no idea how much stress this simple thing would cause her. Yet, she was a trooper and just stood and delivered. The music was poorly edited, and had no reference places for use during rehearsal (right before the service), so she was trying to follow along, but had no way to do so. A bit unsettling and discouraging, under the pressure of playing in front of people, as a high school student, not a professional who is used to last minute adjustments. But she figured it out and kept going, and added so much to the anthem. Thank you, Madeline, from the choir and me. From the bells and Julie Cook Ramirez also a big thank you, for playing March 12th. Her name was inadvertently left out of the worship order that week, when she so graciously played the flute part on "Were You There?" Her flute playing brought the piece to a whole new level and the Martin Ringers are appreciative of her sharing her talents. Thanks all around, Madeline Archer!

April, this year, brings us Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter services, all of which, except Good Friday, will be enhanced as usual by the Sanctuary Choir, under the caring direction of Richard Stiltner. Palm Sunday will feature a triumphant anthem, "Hosanna to the Son of David," celebrating the palms, a reflective offertory, "What Wondrous Love," (not the familiar hymn tune), honoring the Passion, then ending with arrangement we have done a few times, "They Crucified My Lord" as a quiet and somber turn toward the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, observed during our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. Easter morning will feature brass again, the familiar hymns (with the right tune for the opening hymn ;-), and end with your favorite singing of Hallelujah from Handel's Messiah, and the Widor Toccata. I hope you will join us at these services, as they contemplate the death and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.



2023 OVERNIGHT CAFE STATISTICS

- » \$45,210 was paid to two part time and two full time contracted employees for 68 nights with variances in hours and days off. This is a decrease of \$5,968, from last year when we paid \$51,178.
- » \$1,276.18 was spent on meals when there was not a meal donated (plus Superbowl pizza and nachos)
- » \$940.60 was spent on supplies
- » 26 church members volunteered for check in
- » Multiple members donated meals

- » 68 Total Days (including 7 days over Christmas 2022)
- » 226 Guests served
- » 2 Guest given bus tickets home to another state
- » 3 Guests entered Rehab
- » 2 Guests entered Mental health care
- » 2 Guests received V.A. housing
- » 68 meals served
- » 69 light breakfasts served
- » 8 coats given out
- » 13 hoodies
- » 29 gloves and mittens
- » 11 hats
- » 7 pairs of boots
- » 3 cases hand and foot warmers
- » 81 pairs of socks
- » 8 pairs of shoes
- » 28 sweat/khaki/jeans
- » 28 shirts
- » 28 pairs of men's underwear
- » 18 women's pair underwear
- » 12 deodorants
- » 42 feminine hygiene products
- » 49 pairs depends
- » 3 hand sanitizers
- » 8 body lotion
- » 8 toothbrushes
- » 7 tooth paste
- » 4 shampoo
- » 2 conditioners
- » 5 backpacks
- » 10 blankets
- » 25 scarfs
- » 4 bras

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making our Overnight Cafe a safe haven for those seeking shelter from the cold and a warm meal.

