

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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Permit No. 3734
Rockford, Illinois

MAY 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

May is the month that we greet new leadership into the church. It is also a time to give our thanks and appreciation for leaders who have completed their time. Thank you so much to Phil Davidson for his leadership as Moderator.

The Moderator position is a time consuming one. Phil made every effort to attend all ministry team meetings and church events. Basically he had no life of his own for the past year. He is a good leader. Phil was always a calming presence. He will be missed. Even the Dad jokes! Phil will still be in meetings as an Ex-Officio.

Let us welcome all our incoming leaders, 22 members in all. Thank you all for your time and dedication to this church. As we begin this new 'church year,' let us be excited and renewed with all the possibilities that will develop as we move forward.

God Bless You All!



SAVE THE DATE

- May 6: Church Cleanup
- May 13: Jubilee Soup Kitchen
- May 14: Mother's Day with Peanut Bells
- May 21: Ring in Spring
- May 28: Pentecost

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
WEBINAR, RESOURCES WILL
HIGHLIGHT 'CARE FOR OUR WHOLE
SELVES' DURING MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS MONTH



May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the United Church of Christ is kicking it off with a webinar conversation about youth mental health and how it intersects with Our Whole Lives.

The webinar, "OWL Taking Flight: Mental Health Awareness While Offering Our Whole Lives," will include panelists the Rev. Sarah Lund, UCC minister for mental health and disabilities, and Jennica Davis-Hockett, youth ministry specialist for the Unitarian Universalist Association. Registration is open for the webinar, taking place Wednesday, May 3 at noon ET. One aim of holding conversations like these is to work against the stigma that can exist around topics concerning sexuality and mental health. **Read more:** www.ucc.org

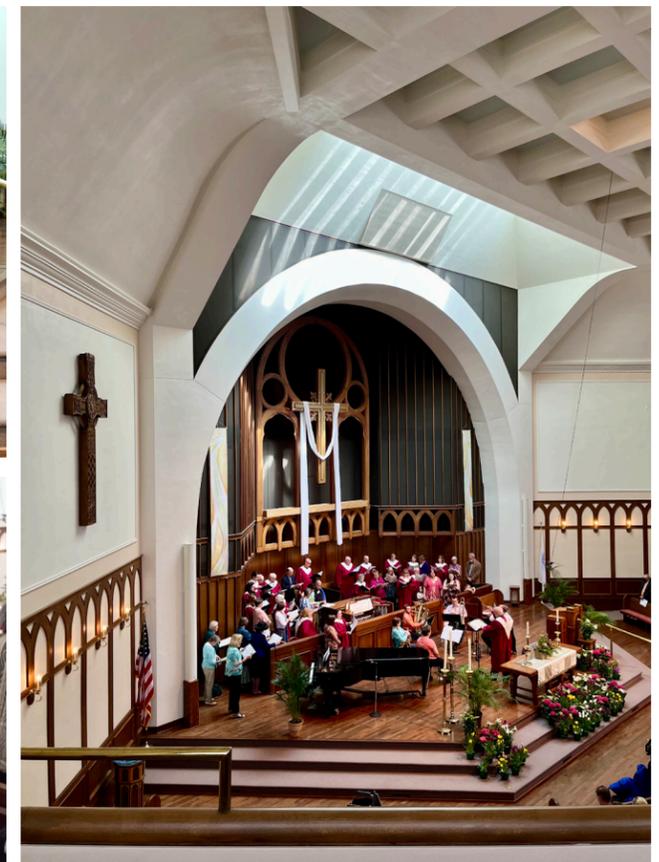
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
J. HERBERT NELSON TO STEP DOWN
AS STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE PC(USA)



After seven years as the chief ecclesial officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, has announced plans to step down from his role as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) effective June 30, 2023. The decision, he says, came after long conversations with his family and extended time in prayer. The announcement comes just days after he told the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly that he would not seek a third term as Stated Clerk. "I have sought God's will my entire life, following in the footsteps of my father and grandfather to preach the gospel in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) I believe that God calls us into new seasons in our life of discipleship. Following many conversations with my wife and daughter, I believe I have entered into this new season," **Read more:** presbyterianmission.org



Our Easter Sunday worship was highlighted with colorful flowers and beautiful music. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this special day of celebration.





REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

By Darlene Riddle

Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me to the position of Moderator with encouraging words. I am not sure anyone ever feels ready for this job, but I take comfort in knowing that I'm not alone and can depend on those that came before me for advice. I would be remiss if I did not give a heartfelt thank you to Phil for guiding us so capably this past year. Who did not look forward to groaning about his dad jokes on Sunday mornings? He will truly be missed, but do not worry, he is not going anywhere, and you will still see him in many meetings.

For those of you who may not know me, I joined Second Con as a single Mom in 1983 when Dean Dalrymple was senior pastor. Tim and I were married here in 1988. I taught Sunday School for many years while both my daughter and son were growing up and I have served on one or two committees about every year since. I love this church and the people in it. It is not in my nature to make hasty decisions; I will try to be a good listener for all viewpoints. I hate drama and conflict, so there will be none of that this year.

We have work to do in selecting a senior pastor, Phil is working on creating a committee to seek becoming an open and affirming UCC congregation, Teams will continue work on strategies towards achieving our 5-year goals, and discussions to discern the direction our church might take with decreasing income will need to take place. I look forward to engaging with you and trust you will give me grace when needed. May we have a fruitful, peaceful year!

P.S. If you do not see me for a few weeks, I have not gone AWOL. I will be recovering from a knee replacement taking place on May 5th. Marge Maynard, our Vice-Moderator, has graciously agreed to fill in for me.

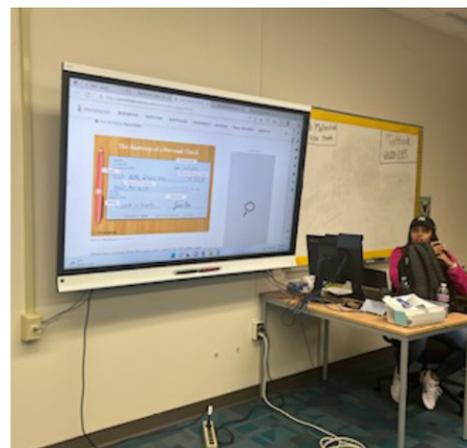
KFACT UPDATES

KFACT continues to hold bi-weekly prevention education groups at the middle school level. April was Financial Literacy aka Money Smart Month and our Mentor Specialists did an amazing job teaching about dreaming big on a financial level. Our girls learned about the value of college education, the importance of budgeting, and learned how to write and sign a check. We ended the sessions with math Jeopardy. Weekly tutoring at KFACT is paying off, and the girls feel more confident about Math and Money.

As the end of the school year is approaching we'll begin our summer programming with FIT Girls! Our first initiative is a partnership with Anderson Gardens: A Path to Renewal. This is an opportunity to expose our girls to nature as they follow 5-10 lesson plans regarding renewing the mind, body, and soul through nature. If you would like to help, KFACT is in need of bottled water and Gatorade.

Last, but definitely not least, please help us congratulate our KFACT 2023 graduates!!!!

- Samara Brown
- Symara Brown
- Nevaeh Calloway
- Yaimiah Davis-Bryant
- J'Cristaa Dixon
- Tajionna James
- Sy'Mya McNeely
- A'Tayjia Patterson
- Makhari Williams
- Taniya Woodfork



KAY BLAIR'S TRUCK GOES TO SAUT-D'EAU, HAITI

By Roger Greenlaw

James and Odette Casimir have recently returned from six weeks in Haiti and report that the greatest request from their community is once again, more garden tools for families in the surrounding areas of Saut-d'Eau. More people will gain food security and grow the local economy! Therefore, this May and June we are again asking our SecondFirst Church Family for donations to support buying more Garden Tools & Heritage Seeds.

Casimir's five acres of gardens are naturally irrigated by run off from the Saut-d'Eau waterfall. Many families work this land and donate a portion of the produce back to James and Odette which they donate to the local food bank. Many families have their own garden plot and now produce extra food to share and sell at the market.

As the local economy grows, transportation of tools, and all the produce becomes important. Their 3 growing seasons require regular trips between neighborhoods, families and the local marketplace.

To facilitate growing the local economy, this thriving community of gardeners need a truck! Kay Blair has just donated her beloved pickup truck to James Casimir who is driving it to Florida as we speak! Her 2000 Dodge Dakota Quad Cab Stick Shift w/ only 128,000 miles was repaired by Doug Phillips and is now PERFECT for Haiti where this age vehicle is easy to repair and where the climate helps these vehicles 'last forever'. Kay's truck will go by barge to Saut-d'Eau this Spring!

All of us working together have increased the quality of life for Saut-d'Eau through food security and education! If you would like to donate to the 'TOOLS & HERITAGE SEEDS' campaign this Spring, please send your check to the church office marked 'HAITI' in the memo line.

Questions or Suggestions to:

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

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



Kay Blair's Dodge Dakota Quad Cab



James with many neighbors tilling a large garden



Sharing heritage bean seeds



Heritage corn seeds

MUSIC NOTES

By Valerie Blair

One of the comments I frequently hear is "we have so much talent in this congregation!" Which is absolutely true. And, although the weather cannot make up its mind if it's Spring, Winter or Summer, it is time to think about summer music. Singing, playing, duets, trios, other ensembles; WE NEED YOU to showcase your talents in service of our worship this summer. If you are interested, please email Valerie at valerie.blair@secondfirst.org. I hope we have a terrific variety, and I am happy to help in any way. Thank you!!



MAY CALENDAR

Monday, May 1
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 2
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, May 3
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Executive Committee

Thursday, May 4
9:30 AM – Carillons
5:00 PM – Hospitality Team
5:30 PM – Overnight Café Meeting
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:30 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 5
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 6
8:30 AM – Church Clean Up

Sunday, May 7
Pulpit Talk Joyce Zartman
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, May 8
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:00 PM – Deacons Fellowship Ministry

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

Wednesday, May 10
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, May 11
9:30 AM – Carillons
1:00 PM – Called to Care
5:30 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 12
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 13
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen

Sunday, May 14
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, May 15
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 16
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store
5:30 PM – Missions Ministry

Wednesday, May 17
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Trustees
6:00 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, May 18
9:30 AM – Carillons
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 19
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 20
No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 21
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Family CE
4:00 PM – Ring in Spring

Monday, May 22
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
6:30 PM – Worship/Music Team

Tuesday, May 23
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store

Wednesday, May 24
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, May 25
5:30 PM – Governing Council
7:00 PM – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, May 26
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, May 27
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, May 28 Pentecost
Kris Delmore
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, May 29 Memorial Day
Office Closed
No Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 30
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store

Wednesday, May 31
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

CHURCH CLEAN UP Saturday, May 6, 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

There will be a beautification of our church landscape. There will be general flower bed cleanup, application of mulch, planting of flowers/shrubs and other projects as needed. Bring your favorite gardening tools and gloves. Hope to see many of you on the 5th. Any questions contact Ron Schaad.

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 will take it from there. What to bring: a hat to cover your hair, a mask, and an apron if you would like one. Call Jean Herro or Marge Maynard with questions or to volunteer.



NEW DATE! RING IN SPRING CONCERT Sunday, May 21, 4:00 pm

Spring has sprung – and you know what that means! Our annual Ring in Spring concert is just around the corner. The new date is Sunday, May 21. Please join for an afternoon of music and mission as our handbell/handchime ensembles present an array of enjoyable selections. 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



PEANUT BUTTER DRIVE From the Mission Ministry Team

Donations of peanut butter and SunButter (for children with peanut allergies) in plastic jars only, jelly, and/or monetary donations are requested by Rock River Valley Pantry and will be distributed to needy kids for their summer vacation time away from school. The Rock River Valley Pantry serves more than 2,500 kids every month during the summer, when school lunch isn’t an option. Per Executive Director Kim Adams-Bakke, “Peanut butter is high protein. It doesn’t require any cooking, and it’s something safe [that] kids can make for themselves while at home.” Let’s overflow the large container at the back of our sanctuary with jars of peanut butter and jelly.

Check donations: Please write “RRVP Peanut Butter” on the memo line. A donation of \$20 will buy a 12-pack of 18-ounce jars of peanut butter. Thank you in advance for your generous hearts on behalf of our community’s neediest children.

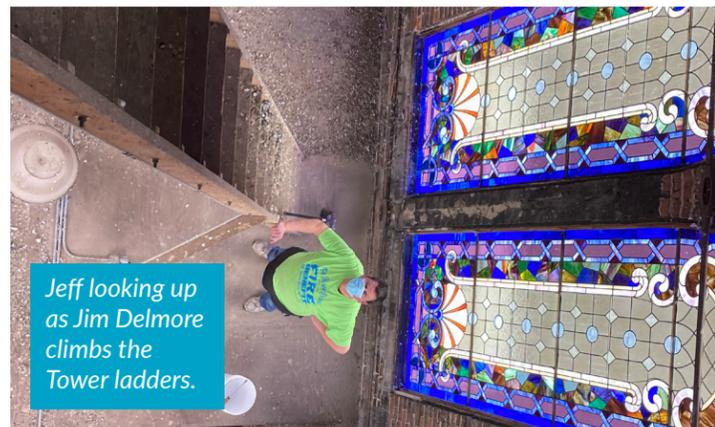
STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH PENTECOST OFFERING Sunday, May 28

We will celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church. The Holy Spirit remains with us still, connecting us with the church of the past, continuing to inspire the church of today, and pointing us to the church of the future. Each year, this celebration is marked by receiving the Pentecost Special Offering which nurtures the faith of both the young and the old. The United Church of Christ uses your special offering to Strengthen the Church. The Presbyterian Church USA devotes it to ministry with children at-risk, youth and young adults.



UPCOMING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- May 7: Pulpit Talk, Joyce Zartman
- May 14: Becky Erbe
- May 21: Becky Erbe
- May 28: Kris Delmore
- June 4: Pulpit Talk, Debbie Wise



Jeff looking up as Jim Delmore climbs the Tower ladders.

A NOTE FROM OUR YOUTH DIRECTOR

By Rachel Huffman

Our youth group has been busy customizing their own space within the church! We have taken over a room on the third floor and are making it feel like a spiritual space. To do good work, they feel a need for a good space that feels welcoming. This is also vital for us to make sure we are inviting more youth and young adults into our church family. Our young adult group, Safe Spaces, has been growing and thriving! It is exciting to see our young adult community growing and participating in meaningful conversations.



Above: The Safe Spaces young adult group at Panda Express, talking about futures and anxieties.



FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

By Valerie Blair

It comes up every year. EVERY. YEAR. Is it “Jesus Christ is risen today” or “Christ the Lord is risen today”? Since I didn’t really know, I decided to track it down; trace the progression through both the Presbyterian and Congregational/UCC hymnals we have used in the past 80 or so years. My intent was to find the right-est version to make the largest number of people happy while singing this hymn we only get to sing once a year.

There are varying texts of the opening hymn we sing on Easter. Every year there is a debate about which one/s to do. This year, we started with the words “Christ the Lord is risen today,” rather than “Jesus Christ is risen today,” (the version in our hymnal), and did 5 verses, instead of the 4 we have been doing. Here is a brief history of the hymn:

In 1708, an anonymous translation of the poem *Lyra Davidica* was published. “Jesus Christ is risen today” is how it begins. In 1739 Charles Wesley published “Hymn for Easter Day,” in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, taking inspiration from that three-verse Latin poem. Wesley’s version contained eleven verses. Would you like to sing all eleven? The various hymnals our congregations have used, use different versions, depending on the year published. Interestingly enough, the version in the 1976 PCUSA hymnal *Hymns for the Family of God* is the same as the 1995 *Chalice* version, but the 1990 *The Presbyterian Hymnal* changed to the current version that is found in the 2016 *Glory to God*. There are several minor differences throughout all the versions, but the most important change to me is this:

“Sons of men and angels say:” (The *Pilgrim Hymnal* 1931, and still found in a 1976 hymnal). This was changed to “All creation join to say,” in the *Chalice*, and “Our triumphant holy day,” in the 1990 *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, as well as our 2016 *Glory to God* hymnal.

“Hail the Lord of earth and heaven! Praise to thee by both be given, Thee we greet triumphant now, Hail, the Resurrection thou!” This is the verse that for some reason was taken out of all successive versions. I’m not sure if it was to reduce the number of verses, but I see nothing that needs to be changed there. So we sang it this year.



A collection of photos from Holy Week: Palm Sunday (with a Lemon Bar treat!) Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday.



GORDON CHAPEL SIGN RESTORED

Thank you Bill Hoff and Ralph Uphouse for your help hanging the Gordon Chapel sign. Bill made sure the stainless steel band around the edge will help preserve and protect this historic piece of our history. Gordon Chapel was built in honor of Dr. John Gordon (Pastor Emeritus) He traveled many times to Europe during WWII ministering to our soldiers.

