

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
318 N. Church Street, Rockford IL 61101
(815)963-8431
www.secondfirst.org
www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch/

Non Profit
Organization US
Postage PAID
Permit No. 3734
Rockford, Illinois

JUNE 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

It's Summer! It is always nice to have Memorial Day behind us – the unofficial, but in my book official, start to the summer.

During the summer your church staff will be hard at work planning and preparing for the program year which will kick off September 10. Our first full program staff meeting is June 14.

We do have some changes in our staffing. Richard Stiltner is now our permanent Choir Director. Richard has fit in right from the beginning and is a great asset to our music program. Val Blair is now our permanent Music Director. Val has done a great job as the interim and we look forward to her continuing in this capacity. Together Val and Richard will be a formidable pair! Debbie Wise, our Office Manager, will be retiring at the end of the year. We love Debbie and hate to see her go. She is the quintessential church Office Manager, always with a smile, and cheery disposition, but we can be joyful for her future life as a retired Gal! Since she will still be with us through the end of the year, we have plenty of time to wish her well and plan celebrations.

We gather together as a church, but the church has to be run as a business. Whenever a staff person leaves, it is a good time to re-evaluate any position. What a church Secretary/Office Manager job will look like in the future for us, may look a bit different. Position hours or job descriptions may change or they may not. Whatever changes may happen, rest assured decisions will be made in everyone's best interest and we will keep you informed.

Peace to all,
Becky



Above: Our Adult Choir sang with our youth.



Left: Peanut Ringers at "Ring in Spring"

MORE PHOTOS INSIDE »



SAVE THE DATE

- June 4: Graduation Sunday
- June 11: Echo Concert
- June 14: Gun Forum
- June 18: Donuts for Dads
- June 25: Historic Auto Attractions



Early Word with Pastor Becky.

NEWS FROM OUR DENOMINATIONS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST UCC'S TRACI BLACKMON AMONG BLACK LEADERS GATHERED IN D.C. TO PUSH NEW RESOLUTION ON REPARATIONS



An officer of the United Church of Christ was in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday to support the effort to restart a legislative push for federal reparations for Black Americans.

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister, stood with Rep. Cori Bush (D-Mo.) and other lawmakers in front of the Capitol on May 17, as Bush introduced the "Reparations Now" resolution to urge the United States government to compensate Black Americans for centuries of slavery and systemic racism. "I am one of the 40 million people in this country descended from enslaved Africans," said Bush. "Our ancestors were torn away from their homes and families, enslaved, and forced to fuel this country's economy since the day it was founded. And then they were left landless, impoverished and disenfranchised. **Read more: www.ucc.org**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR IN KOREA LONGS FOR PEACE AND PRAYS FOR REUNIFICATION



The desire for peace springs from the memory of a 2002 tragedy. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, which means that Korean society has been living in a state of war for 70 years.

In the face of this historical tragedy, Korean Christians are repenting for the past of confrontation and conflict, hoping and praying that a peace agreement will be signed and that there will be reconciliation and reunification on the Korean Peninsula. The aftermath of the Korean War and the pain of the division of the Peninsula manifests itself in many ways, one of which is the tragedy caused by the presence of foreign troops and war exercises. On 13 June 2002, two middle-school girls on their way to a friend's birthday party were crushed to death by a 56-ton United States Forces Korea tracked vehicle during a military exercise. **Read more: presbyterianmission.org**



REFLECTIONS FROM THE MODERATOR

By Darlene Riddle

Thank you to Marge Maynard for very capably filling in for me several weeks in May, making my first month of service as your Moderator a piece of cake. I know there is a lot going on with all the Teams and I expect to attend as many of the meetings as time allows. The Senior Pastor search team has met a couple times, led by Jay Baker. The Church Profile is closer to being completed, waiting on letters of recommendation from folks outside our congregation plus a few other details. The mayor has agreed to write one of these letters. The profile is a deep dive examination of our church that you might be interested in reviewing once completed. It is suggested by the UCC that churches go through this exercise every 3-5 years. Because it is such a laborious process, there's little incentive to do so except when it is time for a new pastor search.

We owe much to Marge Maynard for compiling the information requested from Teams, gathering statistics, keeping us advised of parts missing, and generally keeping us on task as much as possible. Please thank her when you see her. It has been a very time-consuming task which is why we have been talking about it for months. No one is looking forward to completion more than the Executive Committee. Please hang in there a bit longer.

Peace and love,
Darlene

A MESSAGE FROM MUSIC DIRECTOR, 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 is 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 will be 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 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.

FROM OUR FRIENDS AT BLACKHAWK PRESBYTERY

PEOPLE. PLACE. PURPOSE.

How to use what you have to make a difference in your community.

The "People. Place. Purpose." workshop is for all churches, not just those who have chosen to embrace the Matthew 25 initiative. Saturday, June 17 from 9:30am - 2pm will be a day focused on revitalizing your congregation and your mission by reaching out to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

- From true community builder, Dan Kenney, we will learn what it takes to nurture the spark of an idea by building partnerships and coalitions.
- Paul Grier can help you envision what your building can and cannot do for your church and community.
- Eric Heinekamp will share some tools to help sharpen the focus of your ideas through the lens of community needs and congregational assets.
- Finally, we dedicate a session to you: to ask your questions, to share your successes (and perhaps less fruitful attempts) and celebrate your plans!

Registration is now open – click the button below. To prepare for lunch, we ask that you register by June 9. Please contact the Presbytery office if you have any questions.

See you on June 17!
The Matthew 25 Task Force in Blackhawk Presbytery



GRADUATION SUNDAY

Sunday, June 4

On Sunday June 4, we will be celebrating the graduates in our midst. There will be a special coffee hour with cake. Come down and congratulate our 2023 Class!

JUSTIN PAUL HALLBERG graduated from Rockford University with his Master's in Business Administration with a concentration in project management. He is actively seeking employment in his chosen field.

CONNOR ROY HALLBERG graduated with his diploma from Auburn High School. Connor aspires to become an electrician in his plans for the future.

KEIGAN NOEL graduated from Guilford High School. He plans to continue his education as an undergraduate.

NICHOLAS YOUMAN graduated from Stillman Valley High School. He plans on going to the University of Illinois, majoring in Crop Science.

People. Place. Purpose.

How to use what you have to make a difference in your community

Congregations seeking to be of value to their community are evaluating their assets and strengths and finding novel ways to respond to specific needs

Join us for a workshop to explore these topics
and to share your plans and success stories

Saturday, June 17 | 9:30 a.m.—2 p.m. | DeKalb Westminster Pres.
830 Annie Glidden Road, DeKalb, IL 60115

Session 1: 9:30-10:45 Building Community Coalitions	Session 2: 10:45-11:45 Creative Building Use
Dan Kenney offers a wealth of experience from building the DeKalb Co. Community Gardens organization from the ground up—into a vital community asset.	Paul Grier, Presbyterian Foundation, brings knowledge of the possibilities and pitfalls when churches look to their building as a key to revitalization.
Session 3: 11:45-12:30 Community Assessment	Session 4: 1:15-2:00 Resource & Idea Exchange
Eric Heinekamp will explore the variety of techniques available to see where the needs lie in your community and what gifts your church has to share.	The afternoon session will feature an opportunity to share your questions, ideas or success stories. Bring along whatever supports your story!



Please register by June 9 at
www.blackhawkpresbytery.org
(See the link on the home page)
Cost to attend: \$15.00
includes lunch

FROM RACHEL HUFFMAN, YOUTH DIRECTOR

SecondFirst is proud to honor this year's graduates of the class of 2023. Sunday June 4th we will be praying for our graduates during worship and time for celebration after the service.

As our youth and young adult program continues to grow, little by little, we are also excited to celebrate the graduations of these wonderful young people. This year we have 4 graduates: Connor Hallberg (Auburn High School), Justin Hallberg (Rockford University, MBA) Keigan Noel (Guilford High School), and Nick Youman. School, no matter the level, is a challenge. We treat graduations as a given, but they are often the result of so much work, strife, successes, failures, and triumphs that we see only a small part of. To commit to succeeding in school, and receiving recognition for that hard work and commitment, is a marvelous achievement. God bless these graduates as they make their way in the world. May they always know that they have a home in our congregation and a constant teacher by their side in times when they feel unsure. May their lights shine brightly in the world and their illumination make it a better place.

JUNE CALENDAR

Thursday, June 1
10:00 AM – Hospitality Team

Friday, June 2
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 3
No Scheduled Activities

Graduation Sunday, June 4
Pulpit Talk Debbie Wise
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, June 5
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, June 6
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, June 7
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Executive Committee

Thursday, June 8
No Scheduled Activities

Friday, June 9
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 10
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
5:00 PM – Stanley Campbell RUM Dinner

Sunday, June 11
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
2:30 PM – ECHO Ringers Concert

Monday, June 12
11:30 AM – Serious Soup
4:00 PM – Landscape Clean Up
5:00 PM – Deacons/Fellowship

Tuesday, June 13
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Presbytery Meeting
5:00 PM – Adult Ed Team
6:30 PM – Search Committee

Wednesday, June 14
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Gun Forum

Thursday, June 15
No Scheduled Activities

Friday, June 16
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 17
No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, June 18 Father’s Day
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Donuts for Dads
11:15 AM – Family CE

Monday, June 19
8:00 AM – Park District Begins
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, June 20
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
5:30 PM – Missions Ministry

Wednesday, June 21
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:00 PM – Trustees

Thursday, June 22
5:30 PM – Governing Council

Friday, June 23
No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, June 24
9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, June 25
8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
1:00 PM – Meet at Historic Auto Attractions

Monday, June 26
11:30 AM - Serious Soup
6:30 PM - Worship/Music

Tuesday, June 27
7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
12:00 PM – Bible Stories for Grown-ups

Wednesday, June 28
10:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 29
No Scheduled Activities

Friday, June 30
No Scheduled Activities

ECHO RINGERS CONCERT Sunday, June 11, 2023 at 3:00 pm

SecondFirst Church is hosting a special bell concert soon! On Sunday, June 11, 2023, at 3:00 P.M., ECHO Ringers (Ecumenical Community Handbell Organization) is presenting a concert called “June Medley.” ECHO Ringers is a five-octave handbell choir whose members represent about 9 different churches in the area. Six of the ECHO Ringers are also part of the handbell program at SecondFirst. Some of the pieces will feature a harpist, organist, bell tree player, or a hammered dulcimer player. Concert is free, open to the public, and will include a free will offering. Contact info@echobells.com or Joyce Zartman for more information.



SAVE THE DATE: PIG ROAST

Save the date of Saturday September 16, 2023 for the ANNUAL PIG ROAST by the Mission Ministry Team. A beautiful spread of roast pork, green bean casserole, corn bread and cookies will be served. Join the congregation and neighborhood in this festive meal.



CHURCH CLEAN-UP CREW
We're grateful for the generosity of these volunteers who spent their time and energy beautifying our space. Thank you for your invaluable contribution in creating a welcoming and peaceful environment for all who visit. Your efforts are truly appreciated!

CHURCH LANDSCAPE CLEAN UP Monday, June 12, 4:00 PM – 7:00 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 12th. Any questions contact Ron Schaad.

TOWER HILL SUMMER CAMPING

Tower Hill camping is just around the corner. This year camping is July 6-9. This is a great experience for all ages, especially Children ! Ok kids , you need to bring your parents also. Tower Hill is a UCC retreat center located next to Warren Dunes state park located in southeast Michigan, a 3-4 hour drive. Camp is a 15 minute walk away from Beautiful Lake Michigan and our own private beach ! Did I mention sand and water?!! At Camp we have a large Bathhouse with showers and a large covered area with tables. There are electrical hookups at each site. Firewood is provided with fire rings and picnic tables. In the past we have had tent campers, RV. campers, pop up campers, pickup campers. .Contact Doug Phillips for more information. 815-494-0112.



ZOOM AND VACATION DON'T MIX.

Dear Dedicated Members of Ministry Teams and Committees – Do you remember time off, vacations? The tradition was to leave your work and cares behind and take time for yourself, to rejuvenate. We have forgotten how to do this. I wish I had stock in Zoom.

Please, when on vacation this summer, or any time for that matter, truly be on vacation. It will not read on your gravestone- did zoom meetings while on vacation. Skip the meeting, play with your kids or grandkids. Watch the sunset or eat a great meal. We do appreciate your service to the church. We appreciate you enjoying time away as well. Now in case you may think this is the pot calling the kettle whatever color – I will be taking time soon myself and I won't be on Zoom.

Happy Summer Vacation! – Becky E.

UPCOMING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June 4: Pulpit Talk, Debbie Wise

June 11: Becky Erbe

June 18: Becky Erbe

June 25: Becky Erbe



Happy Birthday to Marsha Martin in Stoughton, WI.



The Hospitality Team has been working on shampooing the dining room chairs. Thanks to Anne, Mari, Katy, Arlene, Mary, Jean.

Kids LOVE Camp
SECONDFIRST CHURCH SUMMER CAMP

MONDAY JULY 10TH
NERF DAY

TUESDAY JULY 11TH
MARIO DAY

WEDNESDAY JULY 12TH
FINDING NEMO AND DORY

THURSDAY JULY 13TH
BAKE SQUAD

You may come to just one or all four days! For Ages 5-10

Registration Link: [Google Form](#) or QR Code Below

Location: SecondFirst Church Rockford 318 N. Church

Time: 9am-12pm

Cost: Free

- Crafts and Food
- Water Games
- Interactive Media
- Positive Spiritual Messages



SUNFLOWER HANDPRINTS
We got to work with Ms.Sarah to make a new sign for our garden. We decided to use our hands (by making prints) to create sunflowers. It was a messy but lovely day. Check out some of our pictures!



GROW CURRICULUM
We are so happy to announce that starting in the Fall of 2023 we will be using the GROW curriculum for both the children and teen Sunday School time. It is an amazing resource that has music videos, plays, hands-on activities, and more, all created with the liturgical calendar so that we are aligned with the larger church. It is helping us make use of our other amazing new resource, the TV. The children are absolutely overjoyed to have the media and it has created a way to interact with God on their level. Enjoy some of the sweet pictures from our classes.

SUMMER KIDS LOVE CAMP
Great news, we are hosting a summer camp for kids this summer. It will be held Monday, July 10 - Thursday, July 13 from 9:00am-12:00pm. Each day there is a different theme for kids, Nerf, Finding Dory, Baking, and Mario! Each day will have activities as well as lessons in spirituality. If you know families who may be interested please reach out to Ms. Aubrey.



MUSICAL SUCCESSES
In May the children had several performances, two bell numbers and one song with the choir. It was a gift to have music with little ones back, and our pastor Becky couldn't help but shed a few tears. We look forward to working with our music team to have more opportunities in the future.

RING IN SPRING: A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!
By Julie Cook Ramirez, Director of Handbell Ministries

What an afternoon! From the opening bars of "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah" played by Bellcantos to the Martin Ringers closing the show with Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," this year's Ring in Spring concert was a program to remember. The Carillons shared three pieces, including bell favorites, "Plink, Plank, Plunk" and "The Syncopated Clock," with Madeline Archer on flute and Leah Baskin on percussion. Joyce even pulled out her bell tree for "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair," accompanied by Linda Johnson on piano.

Pop/rock selections formed the foundation of the Bellcantos and Martin Ringers sets. The Beatles "Yesterday," Adele's "Rolling in the Deep," and songs from "La La Land" and "The Greatest Showman" kept the audience's toes tapping. As always, the adorable Peanut Ringers stole the show, chiming in with "The Rainbow Connection" featuring special guest, Kermit the Frog.

This year's concert beneficiary was Get Connected. Founder and Executive Director Tretara Flowers told us how a prison sentence at the age of 18 and the challenges that followed her release led her to form the non-profit. Get Connected is committed to helping the formerly incarcerated re-enter the community successfully and self-sustainably. The audience was moved by her talk, as evidenced by the fact that \$1,173 was raised to help them continue in their critical mission. Thank you all!!!

