

SecondFirst Church

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

I am often asked, "What is the busiest time of the church year?" Most expect answers of Advent or Lent, Christmas or Easter.

For me the busiest time of the year is the

beginning of the program year, September through November. This is the

time many of our church activities begin again. Our Bells are ringing again and the choir is back after some time off in the summer. Adult Education is back along with more activities for our children and youth. It is also the time of the year when we kick off our Stewardship Campaign.

Stewardship Campaign. It is never easy asking for money. It is five weeks of asking for money to be exact. Our church has many hopes and dreams for the future, including a new pastor and that takes money. This building is old and that takes money. The heat, air conditioning and lights are not a wish to have, but a have to have and that takes money.

As we kick off the program year and as stewardship prepares to begin its campaign in a month or so, listen with an open mind and a generous heart.

So, join us for our Kick Off on Sunday, September 10. Our future is ready to begin!

Peace to you!

Pastor Becky

Hello Church Family!!!

We had a very successful church picnic!!!!

We had 70 hungry members that braved the heat to come out for some great pot luck favorites with our fresh off the grill brats, hot dogs and vegetarian hot dogs. I want to send a big thank you and hug to Linda Oshita, Sally Hoff, Jim and Diane Pippel, Katy Peterson, David and Arlene Noel, Greg Makulec, and my husband Troy. Tim and Darlene Riddle, you came straight from the bus to the grill; you always appear just in time! And as always, our Pastor Becky and Jeff who without you, these meaningful celebrations would not happen.

I hope everyone enjoyed the great food and great fellowship.

Together we make an amazing church family!

I serve you all with gratitude, Andrea Akerman



Church/Neighborhood Pig Roast

Good Food!! and Fellowship!!!

Join the Mission Ministry Team on Saturday, September 16, at 3:00pm for freshly roasted pulled pork, rice and red beans, green bean casserole, cornbread, cookies and water!! To help make this another successful event, we NEED your help with the cornbread and cookies!!! If you can bake one of these, let us know! A Sign-up poster will be available on Sundays! Come meet our church neighbors and catch up with friends!! See you there!!!! By Karen Hill



GROW- How to Be a Leader



Our first Unit in the GROW Curriculum that was purchased by FCE has begun and will roll through the month of September. The theme is leadership, and we will look at the various ways that God calls us to be a leader and how to practice in our community. By Aubrey Barnett





Reflections From the Moderator

Greetings friends,

Fall is always a bittersweet time for me. I hate seeing the end of summer with all the summer activities and enjoying the back yard and outdoors. But then there's hot cider and donuts to look forward to; families get back into more organized routines with the start of school, and the church year kicks off. Truly, there is a reason to love every season. Although I find it increasingly hard to love winter – there is Christmas!

If you missed being asked to participate on one of our church teams, do I have an opportunity for you! There are currently openings on DVT (Discernment and Vision Team) and Worship and Music. If you would like information about what these teams do or when they meet, please see Karen Olson for DVT and Donna Schaad for Worship and Music. Also, if you have an accounting background, we need someone to help with our annual audit. Please see Peg Joachim if you would like to share your gift.

Since Debbie is out of the office, please copy Mitzi on requests team chairs may have. There are volunteers manning the office from 9AM – 3PM Monday through Thursday and from 9AM – 1PM on Friday. We are doing our best to fill in for Debbie, but please have patience for any shortcomings. Thank you to the volunteers!

On a personal note, I will be on vacation from September 12-24. I'm very much looking forward to cruising the eastern Mediterranean with my daughter. Marge will cover for me at church and Tim will hold down the fort at home. Thanks to both in advance.

Love and peace,
Darlene

Adult Ed

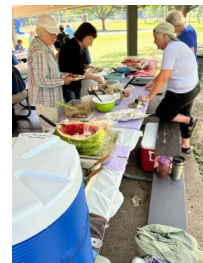
Your Adult Education Christian Ministry Team is excited to announce two kickoff programs to start our 2023-2024 season.

Join us in the Gathering Place on Rally Sunday, Sept. 10, to see a sermon video of our former pastor, Matt Emory, discussing the Old Testament book "Song of Solomon."

On the following Sunday, Sept. 17th, our very own Janet Moore will be presenting her program: "May All God's Children Sing Their Own Song" Our Family's Transgender Journey.

All are welcome to join us in The Gathering Place for these two powerful programs.

Your Adult Ed team welcomes your suggestions for upcoming topics as we begin this next season. We look forward to seeing new and familiar faces. By Lenore Lund



Opportunities to Volunteer and Support

Neighborhood Soup Kitchen

Our next day to serve lunch at the Jubilee Center is

Saturday Sept 16, 2023.

Whether you are a first time volunteer or an old hand at it, you are needed! We work preparing and serving a nutritious and delicious meal. Join us and volunteer!

The Jubilee Center

413 N. Court St
Rockford, IL 61103

10 am to about 1 pm.

Let Marge Maynard know if you can be part of the team or if you have questions.



Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center

Invites you to join our
**Royal Jubilee
50th Year Celebration**

October 7th & 8th

Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center
1922 North IL RT2
Oregon, IL,

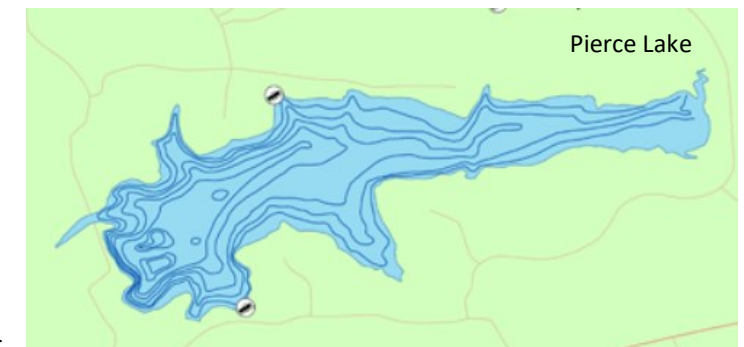
**ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE CONTINUED
MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATIONS FOR STRONGHOLD'S
SUMMER CAMPS/RETREAT CENTERS**



Childrens Fishing Outing

The children's Fishing Outing has set a date for Sunday, September 24th after church. We will be meeting at Rock Cut State park around noon. Kids fishing gear will be provided and we will be led by Peter, who was generous enough to offer after the early word in August where I sought a volunteer.

We are so blessed to have this opportunity. Please contact Aubrey at aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org to RSVP. We will need adults to come along and chaperone, so if you want to bring your gear too, come on and fish along with us. By Aubrey Barnett



From the Organ Bench

SecondFirst will be one of four host churches for an Organ Walk held by the Rockford Chapter of the American Guild of Organists on September 24th, 1:00 to 4:00.

Come out to hear several local organists play some of the finest instruments in Rockford. The “walk” will start at Trinity Lutheran, move to St. Peter Cathedral, then Emmanuel Episcopal, and end here at SecondFirst.

Our organist Valerie will be playing in the concert. Admission is free. This is a great opportunity to hear the instruments and organists around town showcasing what they can do outside of a church service. By Valerie Blair

Music Notes

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteer musicians who shared their gifts with us over the summer months. If I named you all, it would take up too much room in the newsletter.

I am so grateful for you all. Usually, I must play an entire service myself once or twice in the summer, which I am happy to do, but it was not necessary this year due to so many people willing to put the time and effort into providing music.

Choir, Martin Ringers, Carillons, Peanut Bells, and Bellcantos all resume in September, and we look forward to a terrific year of music supporting worship. It is a blessing to have the music we do, and a blessing to have the appreciative congregation.

Peace
Valerie



The Sanctuary Choir

A Restart you won't want to miss!

On Thursday, September 7, The Sanctuary Choir will restart their regular 7 PM Thursday night rehearsals.

We would love for you who sing and love singing to join us.

LET US KNOW IF YOU PLAN ON JOINING!

Email Richard Stiltner Richard.stiltner@secondfirst.org so we can have everything ready for you!

By Richard Stiltner

Haiti Education Fundraiser

Mothers and Fathers Know

The Wild Chicory, the Queen Anne's Lace, and the Black Eyed Susans are all blooming now under blue skies and puffy white clouds, it is the middle of delicious summer in Rockford, Illinois. Yet all Mothers and Fathers are aware that all too soon days will become chilly and it will be time for children to return to school. Will we all be ready?

The Mothers and Fathers of the children in Haiti are also aware of the needs of their children as they prepare for returning to school. We remember that there is no free public education in Haiti and each child must pay \$250 for the school year tuition, uniforms, books, back packs and a daily meal. If the family cannot pay, the child cannot attend school. Many families in Haiti do not have the money to send their children to school.

Our Second First Church led by James and Odette Casimir, has a partnership with the Town of Saut-d'Eau, Haiti in assisting 54 children with the cost of their \$250 per child tuition for the school year. Last year four of our sponsored children graduated from school which made room for 4 new students to begin their studies. Congratulation students!

Our church Mission Team has offered to donate \$1,250 towards the total cost of \$13,500. tuition for our 54 students. If you would like to contribute to this project, you may make a donation to SecondFirst Church with **Haiti Education Fund in the memo line**. This project sends a message of peace, justice and joy to children who live far away but are in our thoughts and deeds.

If you have questions, suggestions or would like to join the Haiti Interest Group at SecondFirst Church, please contact Carolyn and Roger Greenlaw at csgreen52@aol.com, rgreen97@aol.com or James and Odette Casimir at Casiir0401@gmail.com. By Carolyn Greenlaw



Search Committee Update

The Senior Pastor Search continues to move forward! As you know, the Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference recently approved our Church Profile. This document was completed through the process of asking our Ministry Teams to respond to questions from the profile and then compiling their responses. Thanks to Marge Maynard for all of her work on our profile!

Next, our Senior Pastor opening was posted on the UCC Ministry Opportunities website where pastors from compatible denominations have a chance to view it and respond to the listing. We are now starting to receive Ministerial Profiles from pastors that are interested in our church, and the search committee recently met to determine a process to sort through the profiles.

The Governing Council spent time talking about their vision for a Senior Pastor at their Retreat. There will soon be opportunities for you, the congregation, to talk about your hopes and dreams for our next Senior Pastor too. Keep watching the Tower for more details about these opportunities as they become finalized!

Jay Baker
Greg Makulec
Darlene Riddle
Sarah Reinold
Phil Davidson
Mary Spindler
Madeline Archer
Steve Muntz



The Bells Are Off and Ringing on a New Program Year

I can hardly believe it's September already. It seems like we just wrapped the highly successful Ring in Spring concert and now, it's time to dust off our bells and start ringing again.

By the time you read this, all four groups (Martin Ringers, Bellcantos, Carillons and Peanuts) will have resumed rehearsals -- or will be just about to do so. It's going to be an exciting year with lots of fabulous music in worship and in our two benefit concerts on December 16 and April 28. Beneficiaries are yet to be determined. If you would like to suggest a non-profit, please let me know.



If you or your child would like to join us, we would love to have you! Don't read music? No problem! With the exception of Carillons, all groups use a color-coded system that makes it possible to ring even if you have no musical experience whatsoever. And Joyce is happy to work with members of the Carillons who may not be musically proficient as well. So, please don't feel intimidated. Join us for fun and fellowship as we employ the power of music to change lives.

Martins meet on Wednesday evenings, Carillons on Thursday mornings, Bellcantos on Thursday evenings, and Peanuts meet on Sunday mornings leading up to when they will be playing in church.

Please give me a ring (ha ha) or shoot me a text or email if you are interested.

-- Julie Cook Ramirez, Director of Handbell Ministries, 815-543-9739 or julie.cookramirez@secondfirst.org

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Friday, Sept. 1

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Sept. 2

No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, Sept. 3 Hymn Sing

10:00 AM – Worship Service
Communion
10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, Sept. 4 Labor Day

Office Closed

Tuesday, Sept 5.

6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, Sept. 6

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Martins

Thursday, Sept. 7

9:30 AM – Carillon
6:00 PM – Bellcantos
7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, Sept. 8

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Sept. 9

11:30 AM – Mary Young Memorial

Sunday, Sept. 10 Fall Kickoff

8:30 AM – Adult Ed
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, Sept. 11

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
1:30 PM – Hospitality Team
5:00 PM - Deacons/Fellowship

Tuesday, Sept 12

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
9:30 AM – Presbytery
4:30 PM – Stewardship Committee
5:00 PM – Adult Ed
6:00 PM – Missions

Wednesday, Sept. 13

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
6:00 PM – Martins

Thursday, Sept. 14

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

Friday, Sept. 15

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Sept. 16 Pig Roast

9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
10:00 AM – Jubilee Soup Kitchen
3:00 PM – Pig Roast

Sunday, Sept. 17

8:30 AM – Adult Ed
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store
11:00 AM – Kids Choir begins

Monday, Sept. 18

11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, Sept. 19

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop

Wednesday, Sept. 20

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Trustees
6:00 PM – Martins

Thursday, Sept. 21

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

Friday, Sept. 22

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Sept. 23

Sunday, Sept. 24 Peanuts-Carillons

8:30 AM – Adult Ed
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store
2:30 PM – AGO Organ Walk

Monday, Sept. 25

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

Tuesday, Sept. 26

7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Store

Wednesday, Sept. 27

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting
6:00 PM - Martins

Thursday, Sept. 28

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

Friday, Sept. 29

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, Sept. 30

9:00 am – Bridge Online

Kids Choir

Starting Sunday September 17th each week after church for 20 minutes, Miss Val will be leading a music group for the children, which will hopefully lead to a collaboration with the choir on October 15th. You do not need to come to every time, it is a drop in, but we hope to build out musical group up again. Contact Aubrey for details.

If you know any kids who might want to sing outside of the church, this is the perfect opportunity, they can come and parents can watch and have community. Spread the word! By Aubrey Barnett

Hello Peanut Ringers

Just wanted to let everyone know bell season will be kicking off in September! We will be playing September 24th with the Carillons for church service.

- Any children ages 3 and up are welcome to join us.
- The music boards are easy to read, they are all color coded.
- If you need to sit with your child you're more than welcome.

The Peanut Ringer program has been going strong for over 25 years. This is a great mission for our children getting them involved with our church service.

Sarah L Hallberg / Peanut Ringer Director