

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/

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NOVEMBER 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

The days are getting colder. November's chill will soon be upon us. As this news-letter finds you, we will be in the midst of our Stewardship Campaign. For 6 weeks we have heard and will hear stewardship moments in our worship. Those moments will be repeated in our weekly and monthly news.



So what do you think when you hear the word stewardship? Many of you will think, here we go again, the church is asking for more money. While in part that is true, it is also so much more. Stewardship is how we use our God-given talents, our time and our resources.

We have an old building. We need to be able to repair things. Historically we have been generous churches. We need to be able to continue our generosity in our mission work. This means not with just our money, but our time and talent as well. We are in the search process for a new minister. We need to be able to afford a person who can lead us in to the future. We have a growing children and youth program. We need to be able to continue to serve future generations of kids. We have good leadership and an outstanding music program. We need to support our leadership and music.

As we move closer to November 19, our Stewardship Sunday, please consider how you would like to support your church. How can you give of your time, your talent and resources.

**Stewardship is how we live out our calling as followers of Christ. Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe. Taken from the Presbyterian Foundation's Stewardship Manual.*

Create a season filled with unforgettable experiences, personal growth, and lasting memories!

The fall-winter season is upon us here at **Tower Hill**. Super special reduced rates to encourage all to enjoy the Harbor County area here in Sawyer Michigan. The coming season is so pretty and relaxed - there is plenty to do, great restaurants and **plenty of nature to enjoy**. What's **the deal**? For the coming months of November and December:



Relax for a stay in one of our great Cottages for just **\$100 a night**.

Our retreat centers are offered at 20% off, so gather your extended family, a group or create your own fun retreat and enjoy:

St Philippus: is only \$480 a night / sleeps up to 12

The Lodge: is specially offered at \$800 a night / and sleeps up to 20

Schrag: is only \$960 a night / sleeps up to 32

On behalf of Tower Hill and all who benefit, we express our heartfelt gratitude for considering a stay with us. **Create a season filled with unforgettable experiences, personal growth, and lasting memories.**

Some units will book quickly at these rates and some restrictions apply, contact **Tower Hill** at **269-426-3881** today to book these special rates!



Sunday, October 8th, we were blessed by the beautiful combined voices of our Second First Choir and our children.
Please contact Aubrey Barnett if you have a child interested in joining our children's choir:
aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org

Reflections From the Moderator

I'm here this morning with a heartfelt message of hope and renewal, a message that is rooted in the timeless principle of stewardship. Our church, like many others, is facing challenges and changes that can make us feel disheartened. We see declining attendance and dwindling resources, and it's easy to succumb to a sense of despair. But I am here to remind us all that stewardship is not only a solution; it is a sacred calling for our church, especially during these challenging times.

Stewardship, at its core, is the responsible management and care of something that has been entrusted to us. In our context, it is the care and nurturing of our church, a spiritual home, that has been a cornerstone of our community for generations. Stewardship is not just about money; it's about time, talents, and treasure.

First and foremost, stewardship is about recognizing the spiritual significance of our church. It is a place where we find solace in times of trouble, a place where we celebrate life's joys, and a place where we seek guidance and strength in our faith journey. Our church is more than bricks and mortar; it is a sanctuary of love, faith, and hope. I have experienced all of those here. Stewardship involves preserving this sacred space, for it is the heart of our church family and community.

I hope you read the Governing Council report in 10/13 ENEWS. If you're serving on a Team, you're no doubt already aware of our current financial situation. Even as we search for a senior pastor, we do not have sufficient funds in our 2024 budget to cover that expense. Yes, we do have reserves we can use in the short term, but we would be in trouble if a true emergency were to occur if the reserves were used.

Together with your input, we must have a conversation about the future of our church. Not just a conversation amongst Trustees, DVT and Governing Council, but one that gives everyone an opportunity to take part.

What does the majority think we need to prioritize? Where might we be able to cut expenses, if necessary? We've done that by releasing our former graphic artist and having Mitzi perform those duties in-house.

What other ways might we find? How might we repurpose unused building space? How can we be more inviting to increase our numbers? Are we willing to actually invite someone? We cannot rely solely on a new pastor to increase membership. (Continued on top of page 3)

The Pastor Search Committee Update

Our committee continues to meet regularly and has new profiles trickling in. We are starting to engage with candidates over email and expect to schedule Zoom conversations with a few of them in the coming weeks. We can then better determine next steps.

Please feel free to email the search committee at 2nd1stSearch@gmail.com with questions or comments regarding the pastor search. Thank you from your Pastor Search Committee. Jay Baker, Greg Makulec, Darlene Riddle, Sarah Reinold, Phil Davidson, Mary Spindler, Madeline Archer, Steve Muntz

Opportunities to Volunteer and Support



Our 2023 final **Neighborhood Soup Kitchen at the Jubilee Center** will take place on **Saturday November 25th**. Yes, right after Thanksgiving!

Hopefully we will all be refreshed after some good naps and energized for preparing and serving our neighbors. Maybe you will be hosting out of town guests who would like to participate?

Holly Beeman adds "I can only say that on these Saturdays I receive so much more than I give! Join us sometime—it is a great way to spend a few hours on Saturday morning!"

Marge will organize our day. Let her know if you are able to help. Thanks and hope to see YOU there!

Thank You,
Lord



For Our
Volunteers

BOOTS FOR HASKELL Saturday, November 11th at 8:00 AM

The frost warnings have started already! Of course, this reminds me of BOOTS!! As has become our custom, Second/First Church will once again be providing boots for the Haskell School Students.

These boots enable the students to go outside for recess year round, getting the necessary fresh air and exercise that is so important for physical health, mental health and improved ability to learn.



Haskell Principal Loree says "Boot day is the happiest day of the year!" The kids' feet have been sized, the boots have been purchased and now the fun begins.

On Saturday, November 11 starting at 8:00am, we will have our annual boot sorting party in the sanctuary. Boots will be tagged for each individual student and sorted by classroom. At 10 am we will drive the church van full of boots to Haskell for distribution.

Please let Karen Olson know if you can help on this day or you can call the church office or email Debbie (debbie.wise@secondfirst.org) to get on the list to help. Boots (like everything else) are more expensive this year. If you would like to help out with this project, please consider making a donation to the Mission Ministry Team. Donations can be made to the church with the memo "Boots for Haskell" and placed in the offering or mailed to the church.

Contact Karen Olson with any questions. THANK YOU in advance for your support of this wonderful ministry.

Finally...An Ambulance for Saut d'Eau, Haiti

By Sarah Reinold

I have to admit, driving after an ambulance through the Chicago traffic on a sunny Sunday afternoon is one of the more random things I have done! This crazy trip started for me the day before when I drove with Jim Pippel (my dad) and James Casimir 468 miles and seven hours to Fairport Harbor, a picturesque village on the shores of Lake Erie. The next morning, we picked up the ambulance from the Fairport Harbor Village Fire Station, met the amazing employees who worked there, got a tour of the station, and learned about the ambulance's capabilities. After a quick walk up the road to look at Lake Erie, James got behind the wheel of the ambulance, and my dad and I followed him the 468 miles and seven hours back to Rockford.



Though the journey to get the ambulance to Rockford only occupied a quick weekend for me, the work to secure the ambulance had started many years ago. James first identified the medical needs of Saut-d'Eau, Haiti four years ago to the board of the 501(c)(3) he and his family started, Pou Kinam Yo (POUKY). POUKY was able to work with SwedishAmerican Hospital to secure nine beds to send to the hospital in Saut d'Eau to supplement the two beds they had. Although Saut-d'Eau's hospital benefited from this generosity, it became apparent the town had another medical need—a way to transport sick and injured people to the hospital. To me, this need was most highlighted by the story of a pregnant woman who was transported over ten miles to the hospital on a door that was carried by four men.

After James identified the need for an ambulance, Jim and Roger Greenlaw dove into the process of buying a used ambulance. They learned about different sizes and types of ambulances, what engines would best endure the humid climate of Haiti, and what mechanical features could most easily be cared for by the mechanics in the area. They also found out how to check service records and how to hire a mechanical inspector to review the condition of the vehicle. I, in turn, also learned about these things secondhand during visits with my dad! Jim and Roger scoured Facebook ads and learned about two municipal/ government auction sites that sold used equipment. Finally they secured their ambulance with a winning bid—a 2003 Ford E450 7.3L Diesel Ambulance with only 54,000 miles on it. The Fairport Harbor Village firefighters were happy that their trusty vehicle was being passed on to such a worthy cause. They even outfitted it with extra equipment such as two manual gurneys and a stair chair. This purchase was only possible because of financial donations both from SecondFirst's Mission Ministry Team and from other church members.



After returning to Rockford, Doug Phillips serviced the ambulance and solved a couple of mechanical issues. The ambulance is now stored in a local secure lot. The transfer of the ambulance to Saut-d'Eau will occur as soon as conditions in Haiti permit.

In the end, I don't mind random experiences; they provide good stories. I can't help but think about all of the benefits that will come from this ambulance's presence in Saut-d'Eau. Not only will people be transported in it, but they will start receiving emergency care immediately upon its arrival. Through the work of James, his family, POUKY, and our church, we are caring for all of God's people.

Reflections From the Moderator, continued

Now, let us talk about the practical aspects of stewardship. When we see declining numbers, it is tempting to focus solely on financial support, but stewardship encompasses so much more. It is about investing our time, using our unique talents, and yes, contributing financially as we are able.

As we look at our declining church, there are three key aspects of stewardship that we must consider:

Time: Our most valuable resource is our time. We must dedicate ourselves to fostering community and creating opportunities for fellowship. Volunteer your time to welcome newcomers, teach Sunday School, donate soup, visit shut-ins, or organize events that bring our congregation closer. Time spent in service to our church can be just as valuable as any financial donation.

Talents: Each one of us possesses unique gifts and talents. Whether it's musical ability, administrative skills, or a knack for teaching, we can use these talents to enrich our church. By sharing our gifts with the community, we not only help the church thrive but we also find fulfillment in our service.

Treasure: Of course, financial support is vital, but it should be seen as a reflection of our dedication rather than a burden. Giving should be a joyful response to our faith. I love the saying, "Give until it feels good." No matter the amount, when we give willingly and with an open heart, we are contributing to the well-being of our church and the continuation of its mission.

Stewardship is a holistic approach to ensuring the sustainability and growth of our church. It is about recognizing the spiritual significance of our community, investing our time and talents, and providing financial support in a way that aligns with our ability. Together, these elements form the foundation upon which our church can rise above the challenges it faces.

I want to remind you that stewardship is not just an obligation; it is an opportunity. An opportunity to revitalize our church and secure its place as a beacon of faith in our community. As we face these challenges, we should remember that with faith and commitment, we can see our church flourish once more.

Let us embark on this stewardship journey together, and as we do so, may we be guided by the words of 1 Peter 4:10: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms".

As Kathy Lawes pointed out last week, we are mere tenants; everything we have is a gift from God. In the next several weeks you will hear from others about different aspects of stewardship. Please listen with an open heart and give careful consideration to your commitment to our church home.

Thank you, and may God bless our church and our stewardship efforts.

Peace
Darlene Riddle

Music Notes

Thank you to the String Band for providing music for the October 22nd service; we are fortunate to have a group that provides variety in our music. I am planning two series of articles for the newsletter, and I need your help, especially from the long time members.

People frequently ask questions about the organ, and I do not know the answers, so one of the series will be on the history of the instrument, one of the finest in the city. The archives will undoubtedly contain a trove of information about the organ, as well as the Whitechapel bells, which will be the other series. Since I joined the church in 1999, I have heard so many snippets about both the organ and the bells, and am curious about the histories of both. So, please share your recollections and stories from the years. By Valerie Blair

38th CROP Hunger Walk in Rockford

Stanley Campbell was honored October 15th for his dedication to the CROP Hunger Walk. Having just retired after almost 40 years as director of Rockford Urban Ministries he recalled the Walk which he brought to Rockford had never been rained out.



On yet another sunny afternoon about 100 people received a tote bag and walked the 4 kilometer path from the Riverfront Museum Park.

Donations to aid local pantries and fight hunger around the world are still being received. They can be made on line at CROPHungerWalk.org/rockfordil. They may also be sent to treasurer Jan Marlow at 3224 Ruth St. Rockford, IL 61103. Make out checks to CWS. By David Jones

What Jonah Learned About Abundance'

At first glance, the parable in Matthew 25 seems an odd choice for a reflection on stewardship. There is no offering of gifts here, no passing the plate, no mention of money at all. The goats in the parable of the last judgement personified those who aren't particularly generous. The sheep were. Both the sheep and the goats learn, to their surprise, that those they helped - or ignore - were Jesus himself.

God's call to care for His son by caring for others is not a zero-sum game; more for other people doesn't mean less for me. There is plenty of God's grace to go around. The sheep knew that. The goats did not. Even when people suffer the side effects of poverty God provides those who lift them out of it with educational and vocational opportunities. The abundance of God's grace is that there is enough; no one needs to be left out.

We live today in a culture that is bent on scarcity; many have believed the narrative that there is not enough to go around, and so they should hang on tight to what they have. They're convinced that if others get something good, that means there will be less available for them. Perhaps the greatest gift the church can give the world right now is to bear witness to God's abundance. The parable of the last judgement – along with the rest of the Biblical witness – convinces us that there is enough – enough of God's care, enough of God's grace, enough of God's love. By David Jones

NOVEMBER 2023 CALENDAR

<p>Wednesday, Nov. 1 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday, Nov. 2 9:30 AM – Carillons 10:00 AM – Clergy Training 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p> <p>Friday, Nov. 3 No Scheduled Activities</p> <p>Saturday, Nov. 4 No Scheduled Activities Turn Clocks Back 1 Hour</p> <p>Sunday, Nov. 5 Communion Remembering Loved Ones 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service, 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:00 AM – Kid Choir 11:00 AM – New Member Class</p> <p>Monday, Nov. 6 11:30 AM Serious Soup 1:00 PM – Hospitality Team</p> <p>Tuesday, Nov. 7 7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 12:00 PM – Bible Study 6:00 PM – DVT</p> <p>Wednesday, Nov. 8 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday, Nov. 9 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM - Choir</p> <p>Friday, Nov. 10 No Scheduled Activities</p>	<p>Saturday Nov. 11 8:00 AM – Boot Sorting 9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic</p> <p>Sunday Nov. 12 Peanuts Carillons <u>8:30 AM – Adult Ed</u> 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:00 AM – Kid Choir</p> <p>Monday, Nov. 13 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 5:00 Deacons-Fellowship</p> <p>Tuesday, Nov. 14 7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 9:30 AM - Presbytery 12:00 PM – Bible Study 5:00 PM – Adult Ed 5:30 PM – Missions Team</p> <p>Wednesday, Nov. 15 <u>10:00 AM – Staff Meeting</u> 6:00 PM - Trustees 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday Nov. 16 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM - Choir</p> <p>Friday, Nov. 17 No Scheduled Activities</p> <p>Saturday, Nov. 18 <u>10:00 AM - Carillons Rehearse</u></p> <p>Sunday, Nov. 19 Dedication Sunday Carillons 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service New Members 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:00 AM – Kid Choir 11:15 AM – Stewardship Sunday Brunch New Members</p>	<p>Monday, Nov. 20 <u>11:30 AM – Serious Soup</u></p> <p>Tuesday, Nov. 21 7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 12:00 PM – Bible Study</p> <p>Wednesday, Nov. 22 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday, Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Office Closed 11:00 AM - Court Street United Methodist Church Thanksgiving Dinner</p> <p>Friday, Nov. 24 Office Closed</p> <p>Saturday, Nov. 25 10:00 AM - Jubilee Soup Kitchen 3:00 PM – Cara Keller Memorial Service</p> <p>Sunday, Nov. 26 Norm Shirk 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:00 AM – Kid Choir</p> <p>Monday, Nov. 27 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 6:30 PM – Worship/Music</p> <p>Tuesday, Nov. 28 7:00 AM – Men's Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 12:00 PM – Bible Study 5:00 PM – KFACT Open House</p> <p>Wednesday, Nov. 29 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday, Nov. 30 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM - Choir</p>
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New Member Class

Sunday, November 5th

Sunday, November 19th

Contact Debbie in the office to sign-up and for more information.

815-963-8431

KFACT November Events

KFACT's RPS 205 Middle School content for November is Meet and Greet. The topic is *Thankfulness*.

KFact will be volunteering at Stroll on State setup the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Watch for Open House new in the ENEWS!