

SecondFirst Church

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

FEBRUARY 2024

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

February is upon us!!

This will be a busy month! First off Pastor Cal Culpepper and I will be switching pulpits! On February 11 he will preach here at SecondFirst, and I will travel to Court Street Methodist. More information will come as the date gets closer.

Ash Wednesday falls on February 14 this year. Join us for a special Ash Wednesday service from 6:45pm-7:30pm. We will offer the Dispensation of Ashes. Beginning Wednesday, February 21 through Wednesday, March 20 we invite all to our Lenten Worship Experience. The evening begins with a Soup Supper at 5:30pm. The service begins at 6:45pm until 7:30pm. There will be music, prayer and meditation.

There will also be a brief discussion from the book, *The God We Can Know, Exploring the I Am Sayings of Jesus*, by Rob Fuquay. Holy week begins March 24.

Upcoming Lenten Experience

Ash Wednesday Service: February 14 from 6:45 – 7:30 in the Sanctuary.

Soup Dinners: Wednesdays at 5:30 starting February 21 through March 20.

Lenten Worship Experience: Wednesdays at 6:00 starting February 21 through March 20 in the Sanctuary.

The Overnight Café is still in full swing. The cold weather snap brought us the biggest number so far for overnight guests 62 in one evening! Thank you to all of our church members for your financial gifts, donations and volunteer hours. This church is a blessing to those in need.

Grace and Peace to All,
Pastor Becky

SecondFirst Merchandise

Plan for your summertime activities wardrobe now.

Order your shirts and hats to wear to church events, fellowship and volunteering and we now have many options for you to choose from. You can get the church logo on the upper right chest, the church logo full front OR you can choose the church logo on the upper right chest and a custom Word Cloud on the back (Make sure to choose a shirt with "Word Cloud" in the description).

You can pick them up from "Embroid This" on North Second or choose to have them picked up at Church. If you have any questions, please reach out to Jennifer Archer.

https://stores.inksoft.com/second_first



Steve Showers awesome shot of our gym filled with our Overnight Café guests.



Ann and Mark carve roast that was donated by 100 Strong



Ms. Carly donated blankets and plastic ware



Reflections From the Moderator

Hello Church,

How are those New Year's resolutions going? I don't make any, but I read in a *Forbes* article by Kathy Caprino that 80% of them fail by the end of February. The three main reasons cited are negative, self-sabotaging behaviors that resist change, lack of an accountability structure to help sustain change, and fear of achieving the big goal. My belief is that we have an unspoken but implied resolution at church to improve the financial situation that is facing us. We have created an ad hoc committee to study ways we might increase revenue/decrease expenses.

The town hall meeting will have taken place after this was written, but I'm hopeful that some great ideas were generated by the congregation at that meeting. If you would like to be a part of this committee, please contact the chair, Bob Canfield. As ideas are put forth, considered for



practicality and/or feasibility, please remain open minded. It will take some creative thinking to achieve our goal. We don't want to sabotage our goal by resisting change. Accountability for investigating options will be assigned, and there is nothing to fear in achieving our goal – in fact it's vital that we do.

Let's try very hard over the course of the year to make this a successful resolution!

Love and peace,
Darlene Riddle



Sunday School Pictures

Check out some of the pictures of our weekly work in the classroom. As a service activity we decorated bags and filled them with warm socks for the Overnight Cafe. The children put messages of love and positivity to hopefully make the receiver smile and both the warm of the material and warmth of a child's love. Also pictured is our newest child, Nora, who is a fabulous artist, making special creations each week.



Can You Believe It?

By Sarah Reinold

Can you believe it? Debbie Wise officially retired from her position as our Church Office Manager on December 31st. We will miss the cheerful way that Debbie answered the phone, always knew the answer to our questions (or knew the right person to ask), and was such a welcoming presence in the office.

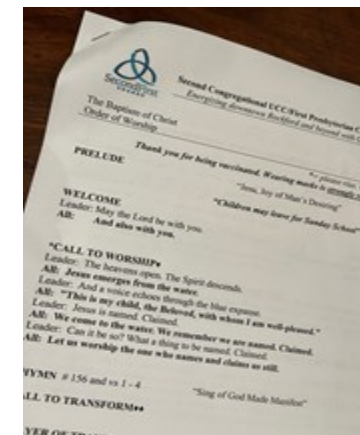
Debbie first started in our office in 2014 and has been a constant presence in our church life for nine years!

In addition to all of her office duties, she has also shared her talents with us during Sunday worship services through her pulpit talks and soprano solos.

We celebrated Debbie and her contributions to SecondFirst Church on Sunday, January 7th at a special Coffee Hour. While eating delicious cake made by our housekeeper, Maria, we had a chance to hear from Pastor Becky about the blessing Debbie has been to our church. We also had a chance to hear from Debbie about the blessing our church has been in her life.



Debbie talked about running church bulletins on a mimeograph machine at her first job.. She felt like she had come full circle as she was also responsible for running church bulletins on Second-First Church's copier!



The congregation had a chance to pray for Debbie and present her with a gift. Debbie hinted that we may still see her in the future on the chancel of the sanctuary where she may continue to share her oratorical and musical gifts with us!

Thank you, Debbie, for your service and dedication to SecondFirst Church!



From the Organ Bench

By Valerie Blair

Our music resumes the “normal” offerings, choir, bells, String Band, Dorothy, and guest musicians. Routine can be boring, but also refreshing, lending structure to everyday life after the chaos and fun (and whatever else) the holidays bring. Similarly, singing the same hymns over and over is good for really learning the words, and hopefully taking them to heart, but learning new ones brings fresh perspective.

As I have looked through the hymnal the past couple of years, choosing hymns to align with scripture, I have found a few that I think are worthy, even though they are a different musical style, and not necessarily a style I would search out. More than one person has mentioned they’d like to do more modern songs, so they will be coming up this year. I hope the more traditional among you will be receptive to the new ones.



Upcoming music:

Feb 4 Choir

Feb 11 organ and piano, [reducing expenses ;)]

Feb 18 Choir

Feb 25 Bellcantos, Peanut Ringers, Martin Ringers

Thank You, Community Foundation of Northern Illinois!



We are pleased to announce that the 2024 Overnight Cafe recently received a \$25,300 grant. The grant was awarded by the Dr. Louis and Violet Rubin Fund of the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois’ Community Grants Program! This money allows us to pay the Overnight Cafe staff and to provide for necessities for our guests like food and supplies. We have received a total of over \$80,000 for the Overnight Cafe through the CFNIL Community Grants Program in the past five years. We are extremely grateful for these funds and the impact they have allowed us to make in our community! By Sara Reinold



Stewardship Report

I bring you the deep gratitude of our church Stewardship Committee for your continuing support of this congregation. Your time and your many talents carries on the ministries of two congregations, now federated as one; thus continuing missions which began in the early 19th century. Image that! Over 170 years as Congregationalists and Presbyterians ministering in God’s behalf to people of Rockford and the world.

This steadfast proclamation of the Good News through word and deed has thrived thanks also to your financial support. Once again I am happy to report that over \$300,000 has been pledged by members and friends of Second First Church. What makes this so remarkable? It is more than was pledged for the year 2023 despite coming from fewer pledgers due to the deaths last year of so many of our faithful church members. As God has blessed you, you continue to be a blessing to those near and far away. In behalf of the Trustee’s Stewardship Committee.

Thank you. By Dave Jones

A Note From Our Children and Family Coordinator

By Aubrey Barnett

February in the GROW Curriculum

In the month so often associated with pink and hearts because of Valentine’s Day, we will be WOWed by all the amazing ways that Jesus showed love. Each week our children are more and more able to talk about the stories and names of the Bible thanks to the supportive way the GROW curriculum lays out these foundational stories. It has been an amazing investment made in our community, and I am grateful every week getting to use it!



Facebook Video

Each week our youth are trying to get out there and ask the congregation important questions. Keep an eye out for them, please be willing to interact, and then look to Facebook to see those awesome videos. Special shout out to Nicholas A. and Jess L. for their amazing work each week on the videos.

Youth Service

Spring is right around the corner and our youth are already beginning to think about the Youth Service which will be on Sunday April 7th. We plan on having the children lead the full service, perhaps even helping serve communion that day. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us in person or online to show your support and enjoy a unique worship experience.

Valentine’s Day

A final thought for parents and grandparents. My children are now six, but it is apparent to even them when we walk into any Walmart, Walgreens, Target, or CVS that each holiday is pushed to the front, usually months before it comes. Christmas starts the moment Halloween is done, making Thanksgiving a passer by, and as soon as Christmas is over pink and red adorn the aisle, knowing New Years Eve purchases are usually in an adult beverage section. But of the many commercial holiday’s Valentine’s makes the littlest sense. Chasing snakes from Ireland and candy hearts? And just where is God in all this love, oh right it’s a naked baby with a bow and arrow! Yikes, what a confusing day to push chocolates and roses.

So this year, I am encouraging all of us to reclaim this commercialized day for God, by doing what Jesus would want. Pick someone who you do not like, someone who has wronged you, and buy them a Valentine’s gift. Something small, something homemade, a note, revealed or anonymous. Give them a gift on Feb 14, 2024. I can already think of whom I expect myself to give a gift to, and I already am mad at myself for suggesting this idea because I don’t feel comfortable. But stepping outside the box to show our children what God and Jesus really asked of us, to love our enemy. Well maybe we can feel proud of who we are on this silly holiday and celebrate God’s goodness for all.

Pastor Search Committee Update!

Happy New Year, church family! Although our pastor search has now gone on for over six months, it has not yet yielded a senior pastor for our church. Although we have had a number of applicants for the position, many of them were not a fit for our congregation. Other candidates that we were interested in learning more about backed out of the search due to personal or professional reasons.

Although we are still engaging with some recent applicants, our committee has spent time brainstorming ways we could increase our applicant pool. When we were first beginning the process of posting our job listing, we decided only to post our position on the UCC website because potential pastors from other denominations could both see and apply for the position. We agreed that it would be easier for us to compare candidates objectively if we received the same information from each candidate in the same format. For example, it was helpful having each applicant answer the same essay questions for comparison. In our recent conversations, however, we have decided that we want to also list our job posting on the PC(USA) website to potentially reach even more candidates.

In preparation for this posting, our committee recreated a church profile that is specific to the PC(USA). After we have finalized the profile and its contents, we will submit it to the Blackhawk Presbytery for approval. After it is approved, the profile and job listing will be posted on the PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection website. We are hopeful that this posting will yield a new batch of applicants for our consideration.

As always, please reach out to us at 2nd1stsearch@gmail.com with any questions or comments.



When God gives you a grace day!

A Little bit more from Pastor Becky

Tuesday, January 23, Rockford was hit with an ice storm. Some parts of town were not too bad for driving, while other areas were not so lucky. My subdivision was one of those areas.

As I sat with my cup of coffee, I watched a few brave neighbors who thought it was a good idea to leave home, try to go up the hill in front of my house. With a little speed up the hill they would try to go, only to slide back down. With wheels spinning, they would try again and slide back down again. Eventually they would give up and limp home. I wasn't even going to try to leave. I chalked Tuesday up to be a grace day. I have mentioned these days before. A grace day happens when for whatever reason all your plans for going to work, school, appointments or going out to brunch, fail. You are stuck at home.

Stuck at home, sometimes is not a bad thing. You can enjoy an extra cup of coffee. You can relax and watch the birds at the feeders. You remember all the things you enjoy when you are home. I was able to read one full book and almost finished another. I planned out the Ash Wednesday Worship and planned for up coming Lent activities. I began a sermon. I spent some extra time with God. Grace days, don't you just love those...

Mission Ministry Field Trip 2.0!

Our field trip to learn about how the Rock River Valley Food Pantry feeds thousands of people a month has been rescheduled to Thursday, February 22, at 11:00 am.

Let Karen Hill know if you are interested in attending, call/text 815-742-0873.

February 2024

<p>Thursday, February 1 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p> <p>Friday, February 2 No Scheduled Activities Office Closed</p> <p>Saturday, February 3 9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic</p> <p>Sunday, February 4 Jim Ozee Choir Communion 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service, 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store</p> <p>Monday, February 5 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 1:00 PM – Hospitality Team</p> <p>Tuesday, February 6 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop</p> <p>Wednesday, February 7 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Martins</p> <p>Thursday, February 8 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p> <p>Friday, February 9 No Scheduled Activities Office Closed</p> <p>Saturday February 10 No Scheduled Activities</p>	<p>Sunday February 11 Cal Culpepper 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:15 AM – Valentines Fellowship</p> <p>Monday, February 12 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 5:00 PM – Deacons-Fellowship Zoom</p> <p>Tuesday, February 13 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 4:30 PM – Adult Ed</p> <p>Ash Wednesday, February 14 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:30 PM – Martins 6:45 PM – Ash Wednesday Service</p> <p>Thursday February 15 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p> <p>Friday, February 16 No Scheduled Activities Office Closed</p> <p>Saturday, February 17 9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic</p> <p>Sunday, February 18 Choir 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store 11:15 AM – FCE</p> <p>Monday, February 19 11:30 AM – Serious Soup</p> <p>Tuesday, February 20 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 12:00 PM – Bible Study 5:30 PM – Mission Team</p>	<p>Wednesday, February 21 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:30 PM – Trustees 5:30 PM – Soup Supper 5:30 PM – Martins 6:45 PM – Lenten Worship Experience</p> <p>Thursday, February 22 9:30 AM – Carillons 11:00 AM – Missions Field Trip RRVP 5:30 PM – Governing Council 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p> <p>Friday, February 23 No Scheduled Activities Office Closed</p> <p>Saturday, February 24 No Scheduled Activities</p> <p>Sunday, February 25 Bells Sunday 8:30 AM – Adult Ed 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:00 AM – Fair Trade Store</p> <p>Monday, February 26 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 6:30 PM – Worship/Music</p> <p>Tuesday, February 27 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 12:00 PM – Bible Study</p> <p>Wednesday, February 28 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting 5:30 PM – Martins 5:30 PM – Soup Supper 6:45 PM – Lenten Worship Experience</p> <p>Thursday, February 29 9:30 AM – Carillons 6:00 PM – Bellcantos 7:00 PM – Choir</p>
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Jubilee Soup Kitchen 2024 Dates

We have the schedule in hand and it's time to mark your calendars! We will be serving lunch on the following Saturdays: April 20, June 1, July 20, September 7 and November 30. As the date approaches there will be reminders, but if you have any questions at all do not hesitate to ask Marge Maynard.



Coffee and Brownies Sunday, February 11th After Worship

Deacons and Hospitality will be having a Valentines themed coffee fellowship on February 11th. We will be serving brownies along side a Special King cake for our Mardi Gras enthusiasts. Please join us in the Dining Room.