

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

March 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

Happy Spring!... Depending on the Date

We all know and are looking forward to March 19, 2024. It is the Astronomical first day of Spring. If you are a weather geek, you know that the meteorological first day of Spring is March 1st. I like this one. Spring comes earlier. I'll go with this one.

It seems a logical thing to go with the meteorological first day of Spring this year because Easter comes so early. As you receive this newsletter we are already half way through Lent. Palm Sunday and the start of Holy Week is March 24 with Easter on March 31. Mark your calendars. It will be here before you know it!



I hope you have taken advantage of the activities that are being offered this Lenten season. If you have not joined us yet for the Lenten Worship Experience, you may want to add it to your calendar and join us. This year we are using, "The God We Can know", video and study based on the "I am," statements of Jesus. A soup and fellowship dinner begins at 5:30pm with the worship beginning at 6:45pm.

We will celebrate the Resurrection of Christ our Lord on March 31, 2024. Join us for the music, the beauty of our Sanctuary and the joys of worshipping together as Christ Community!!

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

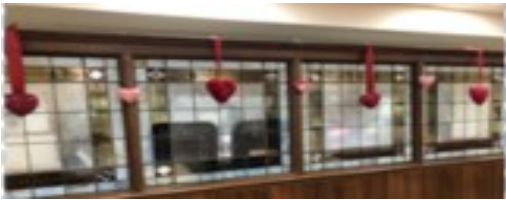
(Make sure to choose a shirt with "Word Cloud" in the description).

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



Thank you Alice for the beautiful Valentines window decorations



Thank you Sue for the delicious King Cakes. Such a wonderful addition to our Valentine / Mardi Gras fellowship hour.



Reflections From the Moderator

Hello Church,

Lent began in our church with a moving Ash Wednesday service. We are reminded with the imposition of ashes that God loves us and that “you are dust and unto dust you shall return.” This is a solemn reminder that the number of our days on earth are always shortening, and it’s an opportunity to confess, repent and become more intentional in following Christ.

Most Christians participate in the 40-day journey leading up to Good Friday and Easter Sunday in some way. I’m participating with the book *Pauses for Lent: 40 Words for 40 Days* by Trevor Hudson with two dear friends. It includes a word for the day, a Bible verse, a short reflection, and a daily practice. On Day 2 (as of this writing), the word is “Return” from Joel 2:13 “Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful.” It’s a reminder that God loves us and wants us to return home. No matter how far we have moved from God, He longs for us to return. The Daily Practice is to “Be aware of the different ways in which the Divine Love comes to you: the smile of a stranger, the presence of a friend, the beauty of a sunset, the enjoyment of a walk. Before you go to sleep, think back on these gifts of God’s love, savor them, and give thanks for them”! I look forward to the following days of Lent to reflect on the remaining words individually and with friends.

No matter how you choose to look inward over this Lenten season, whether it’s giving up something, giving to the poor, prayer, or fasting, may it draw you closer to Christ and remind you that we are “beloved dust.”

Peace, Darlene Riddle

Pastor Search Committee Update

This month the Senior Pastor Search Committee has been busy preparing our profile for the Senior Pastor job posting on the Presbyterian web site! At the beginning of February, we submitted our original Ministry Discernment Profile to be reviewed by the Blackhawk COM’s Transitions Committee. They sent back some helpful feedback that we have been working on incorporating. Through this process, we have reminded of just how great our church is, so we wanted to share a portion of the profile with you. Here is a look at SecondFirst Church (keep in mind that we needed to abide by the imposed 1,500 character limit and did so with a final count of 1,496 characters!):

How would you describe the congregation’s/organization’s specific vision for ministry?

SecondFirst Church strives to follow the teachings of Christ and to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of our community. Our church’s vision focuses on three major elements: participating in mission work, building a meaningful faith community, and developing a deeper understanding of following Christ. Those elements serve as cornerstones for adult and youth programing.

Our biggest outreach programs include “Serious Soup,” a weekly soup kitchen, and “The Overnight Cafe,” a wintertime warming center that provides nighttime shelter. We also partner with a small town in Haiti. Our Church also plans events to help build a meaningful faith community. The Hospitality Ministry Teams plans activities including trips to local events, euchre tournaments, and after-church gatherings. On a service level, the Call to Care program encourages church members to help others. The choir and bell ensembles give the congregation a chance to spend time together while also helping to augment Sunday services.

SecondFirst Church also offers programing to help the congregation deepen their faith. Our Sunday worship time includes a diverse group of lay leaders, highlights the church’s rich musical traditions, and provides thought-provoking messages. Weekly adult education classes, Zoom Bible studies, and unique activities during Lent and Advent also augment faith formation. Members are encouraged to join one of the Ministry Teams to share their talents and to positively shape the church.



Altar Flower 2024 Calendar

There are openings for 2024 Alter Flowers in April, May, July and August. Click the link to see the schedule as of 2/7/2024.

Altar Flower 2024 Schedule

Please email mitzi.muntz@secondfirst.org with a few date options you would like to provide flowers for the Altar.

Include in your email whether or not you would like to greet on your day.

We look forward to seeing the beauty your floral arrangements bring to our service.



Euchre players enjoying a fun night of friendly competition and good food. The next Euchre night will be Wednesday, April 10 at 6:30 PM



Easter Flower Order Envelope

We will be taking orders for Easter Flowers through Sunday, March 10, 2024.

- Double stemmed white **Easter lilies** - \$18.00
- Deep Rose Pink **Hydrangeas** - \$18.25
- Purple, Light Pink or Yellow **Tulips** - \$11.00



Let us know if you want the plant in memory or in honor of your loved ones.

Your Name	Type/Color of Flower	# of Flowers	Name of Loved One in Memory	\$ Amount

Adult Ed Lenten Study

David J Pose asks 7 questions in his "Making Sense of the Cross" book. We will discuss for four weeks, ending Palm Sunday. No class Easter Sunday.



Please email Lenore Lund with questions or comments on this and future sessions. ldlund23@gmail.com

Easter Flowers March 10, 2024

It’s time to think about our Easter Flower Garden for the chancel and what blooming Spring Bulbs and plants you would like to see. (Easter Lilies, Hydrangeas, Tulips)

Please get your orders into the office by March 10th to make sure your color request is available.

Look the Order Form Envelopes (see left) at church and place it in the offering basket during the service or email / call Mitzi in the office. Mitzi.Muntz@secondfirst.org.

Music Notes

By Valerie Blair

Christ, Be Our Light is hymn number 314 in the Glory to God hymnal we use. I'm not sure exactly how it came to my attention, but now I can't stop singing it. It is a modern hymn, composed by Bernadette Farrell, published in 1993. For thirty years, people have been singing this song, and now we will.

There are many modern English songs/hymns in our hymnal, and several from other countries. They don't always translate so well to Western musical notation. Sometimes when I am looking up the recommended hymns for a particular Sunday, based on what I see and hear, I may conclude that something won't work in this congregation. But this one, if I had looked at it and passed it by, we really would miss out if we didn't learn it and sing it. We would miss out on a buoyant refrain, the ease our children catch on to and join us in singing. We would miss the text, set to a very singable melody, that calls us to real action, to be the hands and feet of Christ, to go out and help people

Take the time to search it out on YouTube, you won't be disappointed. I watched a Papal mass in the UAE, an Easter vigil at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish, Dumaguete City- Negros Oriental (Philippines - I had to google), as well as the University of Notre Dame Folk Choir (jammed into the organ loft, with the folk choir instruments with ORGAN, and singing their hearts out).

Its original intent is as an Advent candle-lighting song, so it may show up again in December, but, as is the case with any really compelling song/music, it has expanded outside of the box it originated in, because it has lit a fire in people's hearts and souls. I hope you enjoy learning and singing it this Lenten season...

Upcoming Music

- March 3 Sanctuary Choir
- March 10 Julie Cook Ramirez, guitar
- March 17 Carillons and Peanut Bells
- March 24 Palm Sunday Sanctuary Choir
- March 31 Easter Choir and Brass

Good News from the Choir Loft

By Richard Stiltner

Don't we all need and enjoy a bit of good news from time to time?! Well, here's some good news for our church family. We welcomed two new choir members this past month. They are Lindsey Lancaster and Kim Winger. It is a blessing to have their spirit and talent partnering with us in the choir's ministry!! So, welcome Lindsey and Kim!

We are so glad you are singing with us!



Incidentally, we would have more good news to share if YOU, yes you other church members or friends and family of church members, would join our choir! Please let us, Valerie or myself, know, if you are interested!

Second Fris

FCE Bowling Outing

PARK LANES, LOVES PARK

APRIL 14TH

12:00-2:00PM

\$13 PER PERSON FOR
2 HOURS OF
BOWLING FUN!

RSVP TO AUBREY

BY APRIL 1

(815) 519-3817



A Few Notes From Our Children and Family Coordinator

By Aubrey Barnett

Youth Worship Sunday

Sunday April 7th will be Youth Worship Sunday. The students will be presenting a short puppet show about the story of Doubting Thomas. It will be a chance for the children of all ages to take responsibility for running the full service, including prayers, scripture and a special “later word” instead of an “early word.” We look forward to you joining us to celebrate that morning.

March GROW Curriculum Series

WEEK 1

We can **shine** God’s light.

WEEK 2

Jesus is the **light** in the darkness.

WEEK 3

We can choose **Jesus.**

WEEK 4

God **hears** our cries.

WEEK 5

Jesus died and **rose again!**

"The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?"

Psalm 27:1a (NIV)



In the dark, a world of neon colors comes to life. Whether it’s the soft green of glow-in-the-dark stars or the bright colors of bioluminescent creatures, light can break through the darkness. When the world needed some light, God sent Jesus because he glows in the dark, and he can teach us how to shine with God’s light, too! In this five-week series through the Gospels, we’ll follow Jesus’ life leading up to Easter to see some of the ways he can shine bright in our lives. As we explore, we’ll see Jesus is the light in the darkness. We’ll also learn how we can choose Jesus and know God hears our cries while celebrating how Jesus died and rose again!

Follow Up On Valentine’s Day

So, did you do it? Did you give a valentine to someone new or someone you have a harder relationship with? I did not do the person whom I initially thought of when I created the post in January, but I did get a special present made for someone whom I have never really given a present to, a colleague at work with whom things have not always been easy, but we are working on establishing something better. I admit I felt a bit funny, like I had to make an excuse, it's harder than you think to give a gift when it’s outside a cultural norm. It was very well received, and she later showed it to another colleague who commented about it being a nice gift. Small steps in love and trust and in being as Jesus would have us be to others. So what’s this month's challenge? For March, since its St. Pat-rick’s day, and we get caught up in the “luck of the Irish” what about noticing someone who is feeling unlucky? Find that person in your life who has been given a few bad hands in a row. Spoil them with unexpected Starbucks, or McDonalds, or whatever small thing you think might brighten their day. Leave it from a cute leprechaun to be playful, or just tell them you think you are lucky to have them in your life! Jesus is always showering us with unex-pected luck, so let's practice following in his footsteps and see just how lucky we feel.

Friday, March 1

No scheduled activities

Saturday, March 2

9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, March 3 Choir

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, March 4

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
1:00 PM – Hospitality Team

Tuesday, March 5

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

Wednesday, March 6

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Soup Supper
5:30 PM – Martins
6:45 PM – Lenten Worship Experience

Thursday, March 7

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

Friday, March 8

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, March 9

12:00 PM – AAUW Panel Immigration

Sunday, March 10 Kristine Delmore

Julie Cook Ramirez/Guitar

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Fair Trade Store
11:15 AM – FCE

Monday, March 11

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:00 PM – Deacons Fellowship Zoom

Tuesday, March 12

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
4:30 PM – Adult Ed

Wednesday, March 13

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Soup Supper
5:30 PM – Martins
6:45 PM – Lenten Worship Experience

Thursday, March 14

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

Friday, March 15

No scheduled activities

Saturday, March 16

9:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
2:00 PM – Carillons Rehearsal

Sunday, March 17 Peanuts/Carillons

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
9:30 AM – Peanut Bells Rehearsal
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Fair Trade Store

Monday, March 18

11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, March 19

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
5:30 PM – Missions Hybrid

Wednesday, March 20

10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
5:30 PM – Soup Supper
5:30 PM – Martins
6:00 PM – Trustees Hybrid
6:45 PM – Lenten Worship Experience

Thursday, March 21

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

Friday, March 22

No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, March 23

No scheduled activities

Sunday, March 24 Palm Sunday Choir

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Fair Trade Store
11:15 AM – Lemon Bars Fellowship

Monday, March 25

8:00 AM – Rockford Park District
11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, March 26

7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
8:00 AM – Rockford Park District
9:00 AM – Thrift Shop

Wednesday, March 27

8:00 AM – Rockford Park District

Thursday, March 28

8:00 AM – Rockford Park District
6:30 PM – Maundy Thursday Worship

Friday, March 29 Good Friday

12:00 PM – Good Friday Meditations

Saturday, March 30

9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, March 31 Easter

8:30 AM – Coffee Class
10:00 AM – Worship Service
10:20 AM – Sunday School
11:15 AM – Fair Trade Store

Be a Greeter



Calling all folks with bright smiles and friendly greetings. We would like to re-institute the practice of having greeters in the South Narthex before our Sun-day Worship service.

You would be asked to arrive between 20 to 30 minutes early and greet those arriving to welcome them to our worship.

Please contact Jim Burrright at (815-218-9131 or jnlburr@comcast.net or the church office if you are interested."