

SecondFirst Church

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

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

May 2025



The Tower

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace



From The Pastor's Desk...

Watering the Earth

From Psalm 65, we hear, "Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion... You visit the earth and water it... You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers and blessing its growth."

We are in the season of Easter, a season in the church that proclaims hope and new life, even as it calls us into a time of growth. That growth begins in praise and gratitude for God's work in the world around us.



There is much in the life of this congregation that mirrors this season. We've ushered in new leadership at the Annual Meeting. We've welcomed new staff into the church office. We're in a time of transition that offers a unique opportunity to examine our life together and our service in this community and beyond.

God is watering the furrows, settling the ridges, softening our soil with showers, with the promise of that God's blessing attends the future that is—even now—unfolding in our midst. (That's not to say we resemble muddy furrows, but transitions can feel a little messy.)

As this congregation expresses our gratitude for those who have served long and well, we also express our welcome to the folks who are taking up the mantle of service. Last July, we welcomed Jacquie Bradford as our new Receptionist and Charles Fernandez as our new Graphic Designer. In March of this year, we welcomed Caryl Hay as our new Bookkeeper and Business Manager. In April, you welcomed me as Pastor, and we welcomed Josh Hopkins as our new Building Manager.

As this new staff configuration unfolds, I will rely on the people of this community to provide those seeds of institutional knowledge that will help our new staff members flourish. I will also rely on the people of this community to give thanks for the ongoing work of our Musicians, Val and Haley and Sarah and Joyce; our Children and Family Coordinator, Aubrey; our childcare provider, Tantalaya; our Housekeeper, Maria; our Gatekeepers, Todd and Christoffer.

Spring is happening all around us AND it is happening in our midst. Praise God, for the new life blossoming in each of us, in all of us together, and in the world around us.

Blessings, Martha

Here's some drone pictures of the gymnasium rooftop now covered with solar panels!

They were installed the week after Easter. Moving forward in the 21st Century.



Musings From The Moderator

A few months ago, I asked everyone to think about where they fit as a member of the Body of Christ. Today I'm reflecting on a similar question of who WE are in the Body of Christ. What strikes me is that WE are the heart of Christ, the one who showed the world during a few short years of public ministry what the heart of God looks and acts and sounds like. WE are the compassion of God working in the world, for the world.

God's compassion seeps not only toward those within the church (local and global) but to all who live beyond these walls, who also have been made in the image of the invisible God, the God who according to Paul, cuts across all human divisions: male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. One way we express this for 21st Century ears is that it doesn't matter where you come from, who you love, what doubts you carry; you are loved and valued by the God who created and loves you just as you are, and whose love is inexhaustible.

There is a feeling in some circles that too much compassion, offered too freely to those they view as sinners, is toxic to each of us and to our society. In my view, this is nonsense; concern for others is foundational to our faith. In Exodus, Yahweh exhorts the Israelites to remember how it felt to be a stranger/foreigner, and so to act towards those persons with compassion. Of course, Jesus's behavior is our gold standard, from Matthew 25's reference to caring for the "least of these" to the stories of Jesus freely loving on an "undeserving" person in The Good Samaritan, the Samaritan woman at the well, the Roman centurion's son, and the woman about to be stoned for adultery.

All these persons were considered to be beyond the reach of God's (and our) love, yet all were recipients of Jesus's compassion. In the Sunday announcements I refer to Acts 10, "Jesus went around doing good". There are no bigger or better shoes to fill. Let us follow the Way shown to us and boldly strive to be the heart of Christ and fill the world with compassion, no exceptions or excuses.

Marge Maynard



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION SECOND FIRST WEINGARTNER SCHOLARSHIP FUND SECOND CONGREGATIONAL-FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 318 N. CHURCH ST. ROCKFORD, IL 61101

Name of Student _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Application _____

Parents' Name(s) _____

Home Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

High School _____ Year of Graduation _____

Name of College/Institution _____

Address _____

Student's Current Status: FR SO JR SR Full-Time Part-Time

Anticipated Date of Graduation _____

Major Field(s) of Study _____

ESTIMATED COSTS OF EDUCATION

Tuition and Fees _____ Room and Board _____

Books and Supplies _____ Personal Expenses _____

Transportation _____ Other _____

Total: _____

OTHER FINANCIAL AID, SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS OR LOANS

Please list any other scholarships, grants, or funding already known, and amounts:

Music Notes... by Valerie Blair

A big thank you to everyone who made Easter a beautiful service this year. Starting a new pastor the week before Holy Week presents some challenges, as did having Ring In Spring and the Annual Meeting the week after that. As usual, this congregation stepped up and met the challenges and even gave me an emotional moment during the Hallelujah Chorus, which was very unexpected.

Now, it's already May and summer is not so far down the road. Calling all musically inclined members who would like to share music for services over the summer.

Let me know what and when, and we'll have our usual great variety this year. I am available to help with finding pieces in the choir library, and for whatever else you might want.

Valerie.blair@secondfirst.org

Valerie Blair, M.M., CAGO
Director of Music/Organist/Pianist
Second Congregational/First Presbyterian Church, Rockford, IL



What's Happening This Month? (Save the Date!)

Tuesday Mornings at 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast: Dining Room in the Church. This month that'll be on the 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th.

Tuesdays in May at 9:00 AM - Thrift Shop: Located in the Dining Room from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. May 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th.

Sunday, May 4th at 11:00 AM - Reception for Nancy Yoeckel: Please join us on Sunday, May 4th in the gym for a reception for Nancy Yoeckel. Nancy is retiring after many years as our church bookkeeper. Help us celebrate her work and wish her well in retirement!

SecondFirst Merchandise

Plan for your activities wardrobe now.

Order your shirts, hats and water bottles now so you have them for 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

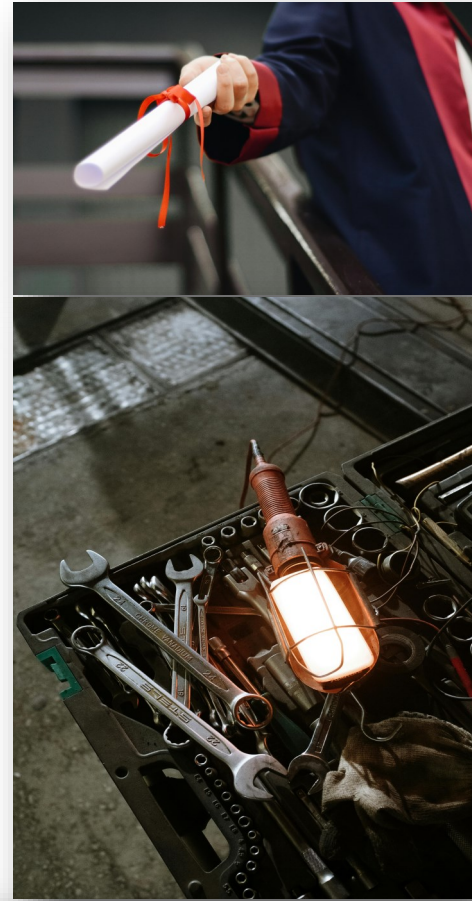


Attention, Students pursuing post-secondary education!!

Did you know that SecondFirst Church has scholarship funds available to support you as you further your education?

Funds can be used for **trade school, community college,** and/or **4-year universities.** If you are a member of SecondFirst, you are eligible to apply. Applications are now being accepted for the Second First Weingartner Scholarship. Please contact the church office to receive one.

Applications are due by June 15, and scholarships will be awarded in August. Applicants can apply yearly. Gifts will vary due to the number of applicants and our return on investment.



Church members: Are you looking for a way to help the youth of our church? Donations can be made to the Second First Weingartner Scholarship Fund, so we can continue to award scholarships!

If you want to apply to the Second First Weingartner Scholarship...

Digital copy link: <https://www.secondfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SFC-Scholarship-Application.pdf>

On page 7 you will find a paper copy. Turn in completed applications to the church office by June 15th!

May Calendar

Thursday, May 1

9:30 AM- Carillons
6:00 PM- Choir
7:30 PM- El Shaddai (Heritage Library)

Friday, May 2

Office is Closed

Saturday, May 3

No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 4

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

Monday, May 5

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
12:30 PM- Hospitality

Tuesday, May 6

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

Wednesday, May 7

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, May 8

9:30 AM – Carillons
7:00 PM – Choir
7:30 PM- El Shaddai (Heritage Library)

Friday, May 9

Office is Closed

Saturday, May 10

9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic

Sunday, May 11

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

Monday, May 12

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:30 PM- Deacons/Fellowship

Tuesday, May 13

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

Wednesday, May 14

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting
6:00 PM- League of Women Voters (Sanctuary)

Thursday, May 15

9:30 AM – Carillons
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, May 16

Office is Closed

Saturday, May 17

No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 18

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

Monday, May 19

11:30 AM – Serious Soup
5:00 PM- Missions

Tuesday, May 20

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

Wednesday, May 21

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, May 22

9:30 AM- Carillons
5:30 PM- Governing Council
7:00 PM- Choir

Friday, May 23

Office is Closed

Saturday, May 24

No Scheduled Activities

Sunday, May 25

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

Monday, May 26

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Tuesday, May 27

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

Wednesday, May 28

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting
6:00 PM- Martin Ringers

Thursday, May 29

9:30 AM – Carillons
7:00 PM - Choir

Friday, May 30

Office is Closed

Saturday, May 31

No Scheduled Activities

Please Note:

Changes to times and cancellations can happen with short notice due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances. Please check with the church office to confirm if meetings/activities are still happening according to the calendar!