

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



Martha’s Mental Space

“The Why Question” *By: Martha Langford*

Part of my training in active listening discourages the use of “why” questions. A “Why?” question tossed into a conversation can be a verbal grenade. It can convey accusation, censure, judgement, AND it can halt conversation.



Along the way, I’ve learned that asking why needs a particular set of skills. The first of these is genuine curiosity. Open enthusiasm for learning and connecting and understanding more about someone or something diffuses the “why” grenade. The second of these is opening space for conversation with open ended questions that avoid the “why” word all together.

- Tell me more about that.
- How did this work begin?
- What was most influential in reaching this decision?
- How does this line up with today’s mission goals and dreams?

The active pursuit of “remembering why” is a powerful way to reflect on one’s purpose, reasons, motivation, direction, and goals. “Why” can help us assess the “What” and the “How” of our work together. Dropped into the middle of intentional discernment, “Why” can guide our imaginations, open new possibilities, and help us identify which of our traditions has staying power, which need fresh interpretation, and which need an honorable retirement.

I remember a sermon fable. The family set down to Easter dinner as they had year after year. The Easter ham in all its glory was gently placed at the center of the table and one of the grandchildren asked, “Dad, why are there two hams?” His dad shrugged and said he would have to ask his grandmother. When asked, the grandmother simply said that was always the way the family cooked the ham—but GiGi might know more.

It so happened that GiGi, the child’s great-grandmother, lived in a nursing facility nearby. When the family visited that afternoon, the child wiggled with anticipation. They’d barely gotten through the door when she asked, “GiGi, GiGi, why do we cut the Easter ham to cook it?” GiGi laughed and said, “Child, when I first married your great grandpa, we didn’t have a pan big enough to hold the Easter ham, so I always cut it into two pieces before baking it.”

The “Why” is important – regardless of how we ask it – because on this journey of faith it helps us think deeply about who we are, how we got here, and where we are going next.

Blessings, Martha

The solar panels that grace our rooftops are now connected to ComEd. Reroofing is underway over the gym office, and solar panels will be installed there soon.



A little Missive From Your Moderator

The Tower

The monthly publication of

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST
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Illinois

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On June 8th, we celebrated Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church. Pentecost reminds us of the miracle of the Holy Spirit allowing different cultures to understand one another in their own language.

On July 4th, we will celebrate the birthday of our nation. A lot has happened in the nearly 250 years since the Declaration of Independence separated us from English rule. Advancements in medicine, science, education, technology, industry, transportation, agriculture, and communication, so much of which have been for the betterment of our lives. What we continue to struggle with is building relationships. Cultural differences, which are just that - differences, can set people apart, leading to misunderstanding, disdain, and worse - hostility. It is difficult if not impossible to rectify the ongoing conflicts when man acts without developing relationships, relationships which by their very nature are built on respect, forgiveness, and ultimately love. Our primary relationship begins with God, based on our belief that through God all things are possible.

John Adams, in *1776*, another of my favorite musicals, speaks of an Independence Day filled with “pomp and parade, fireworks, bells ringing out, and Americans, **all** Americans, free forevermore.” We’re still working on that, John, and look to the final paragraph of the Declaration as our guide. As the assembled body of men from various backgrounds, religious beliefs, and political perspectives prepared to sign the Declaration that would set the course of this new nation, they acknowledged, as the document concludes, "with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

We too pray that God be with us on our way.

Yours,
Linda Oshita

Jeremiah Development: Volunteers Needed July 12

Come join LOVE Rockford on this fun fill day as a volunteer. Just 5 hours or less of your time would be greatly appreciated. We need parking attendants, Setup, Takedown and Giveaways Attendants.
Let’s start this summer with some fun in the sun! Thank You!

Where: 803 N. Church St

Date: July 12, 2025

Time: 9:00am-2:00pm

For More Details please contact:

Nitro Starling (815) 627-0004

Email: Nitro@Jeremiahdevelopment.org



YOU'RE INVITED!
COME JOIN LOVE ROCKFORD BACKYARD EVENT
· DATE: JULY 12, 2025
· TIME: 10 A.M. TO 1 P.M.
· LOCATION: 803 N. CHURCH ST., ROCKFORD, IL 61103
· TYPE OF EVENT: HEALTH FAIR
THIS HEALTH FAIR WILL BE GOOD FOR THE SOUL AND IT'S THE PERFECT WAY TO START THE SUMMER! THERE WILL BE THREE HOURS OF FREE HAIR CUTS, DANCING, FOOD, RESOURCES, AND MUCH MORE. YOUR PRESENCE WILL MAKE THE EVENT EVEN MORE SPECIAL.
RSVP INSTRUCTIONS
PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE BY [REGISTRATION TABLES AT THE EVENT]. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!
LET'S GET THIS SUMMER STARTED RIGHT!
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE AND CELEBRATE TOGETHER!

FOR MORE DETAIL CONTACT: NITRO
STARLING (815)627-0004

Rock River Valley Pantry

Often, when we think of Rock River Valley Pantry (RRVP), we associate it with providing food for those in need. That is correct but those needs go deeper. Several of those needs are soap both laundry and personal, shampoo, dental and personal hygiene. Sadly, RRVP is unable to secure grants for these items yet, that need still exists. Here is where we, Second First Church come in. Once our Mission Team learned of this need, we agreed we should begin to shop for and contribute these items. Currently we do this several times a year in addition to the food we collect each week. The picture here is the result of one shopping trip. Total weight about 63 lbs - and, at a quick glance, may not look like much. So, take a second look. What you will see is an amount of goods that will fill the needs of many in the weeks to come! Thank you Second First Church for your support in this local mission!



Jubilee Soup Kitchen July 26th

Coming up on July 26...we are putting together a team to prepare and serve lunch at the Jubilee Center. This is just off the parking lot of our neighbor Emmanuel Episcopal Church, right across Park St. between Church and Court St.

We will work from 10 am to about 1 pm, getting the lunches ready and setting up tables and chairs. If you would like to get your hands into this ministry and make a difference in the lives of our neighbors, let Marge Maynard know. First timers as well as well-seasoned timers are welcome!



Third Annual SecondFirst Fishing Trip (June 2025)

Our youth had an amazing time at our 3rd annual 2nd/1st fishing trip at Rock Cut State Park before the rain rolled in. The smiles were big, hot dogs were plentiful, blue gills of all sizes were biting (unless you were Mr. John), and the memories made will last forever. A huge thank you to our fearless fishing leaders Mr. Tim & Mr. Peter who provided their expertise and made sure all the poles were tangle free and baited!

Thank you also to the parents and grandparents who helped make sure no one fell into the water! We are already looking forward to next year's trip.



Save the Date!

July 4th— BE SAFE AND HAPPY 4th of JULY!!!

We don't have any plans here at church, but please have a safe and happy 4th of July! Pray that everyone keeps their fingers and hearing, or what's left of them!

Tuesday July 8th— Thrift Shop

9:00 AM first Tuesday of July Thrift Shop is open. Remember, it's always on the first Tuesday of the month until further notice.

Saturday July 26th— Jubilee Soup Kitchen

From 10 am to 1 pm we will be serving our neighbors lunch from the Emmanuel Episcopal Church parking lot. If you'd like to volunteer, speak with Marge Maynard.

ONA News

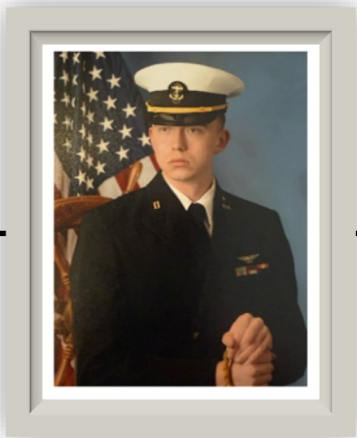
Our ONA (Open & Affirming) Task Force is making progress! And is being more visible! Six members of our church joined Jeremiah Development to participate in the 2nd Annual Rockford PRIDE Parade, June 7. One member attended Emmanuel Episcopal's Pride & Pizza event. Fun was had with a game of Pride Trivia, and we were able to learn about their ONA Mission.

- Thirteen members gathered May 21 to participate in an UCC ONA Webinar. This webinar was recorded and is available to share.
- What's next??? The Task Force is working on a ONA Covenant. This is very similar to our church's Mission Statement. It will eventually be shared with the congregation for approval.

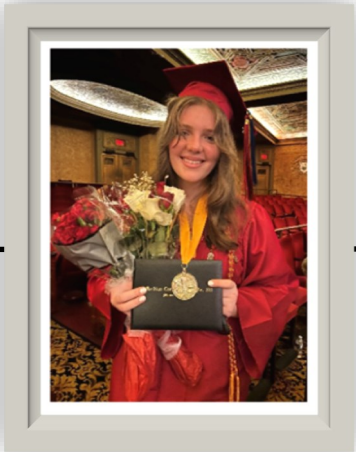
Holly Hegge and Sally Etheridge will be attending the UCC ONA Conference in Kansas City in July! We're sure they will learn lots to share with us as we continue this process to be Open and Affirming.



Honoring Our SecondFirst Church Graduates!



Hayden Hallberg graduated from the Naval Academy preparatory school in Newport, RI. Hayden will be reporting to Annapolis, MD at the Naval Academy in June.

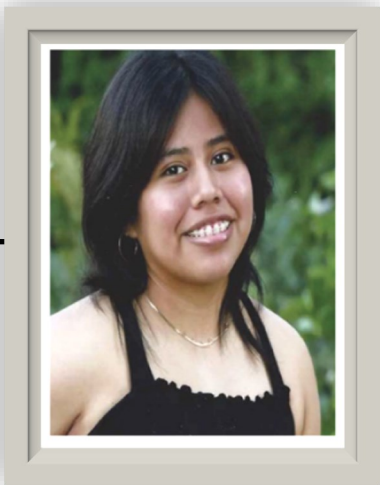


Katherine Youman graduated from Stillman Valley High School and will be attending University of Iowa in the fall.



Hannah Herro- daughter of Michael Herro and Aileene Herro. Hannah graduated from Princeton High School and will attend Sauk Valley College in Dixon, IL. to become an x-ray technician.

Coco Herro- daughter of Gregory Herro and Sara Girardi. Coco graduated from Evanston Township High School and will attend Aurora University in Aurora, IL to become a preschool teacher



Dear Lord...

We pray for students everywhere as they embark on their educational journeys. Grant them curiosity and the desire to learn.

Amen

July 2025 Calendar

Tuesday, July 1 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 AM - Solar Walkthrough	Friday, July 11 8:00 AM- Park District Office is Closed	Monday, July 21 8:00 AM- Park District 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 5:30 PM- Missions
Wednesday, July 2 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting	Saturday, July 12 Office is Closed	Tuesday, July 22 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
Thursday, July 3 7:30 PM- El Shaddai (Heritage Library)	Sunday, July 13 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School	Wednesday, July 23 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting
Friday, July 4 Office is Closed	Monday, July 14 8:00 AM- Park District 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 5:30 PM- Deacons/Fellowship	Thursday, July 24 5:30 PM- Governing Council
Saturday, July 5 No Scheduled Activities	Tuesday, July 15 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 AM- Park District	Friday, July 25 Office is Closed
Sunday, July 6 10:00 AM – Worship Service w/ Communion 10:20 AM – Sunday School	Wednesday, July 16 8:00 AM- Park District 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting 6:00 PM- Trustees	Saturday, July 26 10:00 AM- Jubilee Soup Kitchen
Monday, July 7 8:00 AM- Park District 11:30 AM – Serious Soup	Thursday, July 17 8:00 AM- Park District 9:30 AM- Carillons	Sunday, July 27 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School
Tuesday, July 8 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 AM- Park District 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop	Friday, July 18 8:00 AM- Park District Office Closed	Monday, July 28 11:30 AM – Serious Soup 6:00 PM - Worship/Music
Wednesday, July 9 8:00 AM- Park District 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting	Saturday, July 19 9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic	Tuesday, July 29 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
Thursday, July 10 8:00 AM- Park District No Scheduled Activities	Sunday, July 20 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:15 AM- FCE	Wednesday, July 30 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting
		Thursday, July 31 No Scheduled Activities

Please Note:
Outside of normal Sunday Worship, most events are subject to change. Cancellations happen, and so do new events. If you don’t see an event on here, but you see it posted elsewhere, just ask. We will get you the correct information. This Newsletter is published the last week of the previous month.