

**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

August 2025  
*The Tower*  
Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace



**The Wonderful World of Polity**

As this newsletter makes its way to you, I will have completed classwork with Pathways Seminary on the History and Polity of the United Church of Christ. The work has helped me appreciate the points of similarity and difference between the federated congregations of Second/First Church. Presbyterians and United Church of Christ both have deep roots in the 16th Century Protestant Reformation when theologians and church leaders sought to change church practices that didn't serve the people or

the world around it. Many of our predecessors found their way to the "new world" seeking the freedom to practice their religious convictions—and would come to understand the need for separation of church and state in the days when being on the membership role of the local congregation was required to vote!

Pilgrims came to this country with the admonition not to petrify around the work of those early reformers. In his farewell address to the Pilgrim families, Pastor John Roberts gave his encouragement and the reminder that "There is yet more truth and light to break forth from God's Holy Word." The "truth and light" discerned in modern times includes key practices and principles which the UCC commends to the local church: Just Peace, Open and Affirming, Anti-Racist, Immigrant Welcoming, and Creation Justice among others. These have corresponding practices in the PCUSA particularly through the Matthew 25 initiative in which Second/First takes part.

Both denominations understand that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, that members belong to the "priesthood of all believers." We believe in ecumenical cooperation and collaboration as a necessary demonstration of the churches unity in Christ. Both denominations belong to the World Council of Churches and the World Council of Reformed Churches. In addition, the UCC is a "United and Uniting Church" seeking to embody that essential unity in response to Jesus' prayer, "that they all may be one."

In its 1957 founding, the UCC formed from Congregational, Christian, and Reformed Church in the US, and the Evangelical Synod. It married its Reformed theological heritage with Congregational polity described as "covenantal." Local Churches are covenant partners in the denomination and make covenant commitments (or not) in response to the discernment work of each General Synod.

Perhaps the deepest difference between the two denominations is the unbreakable autonomy of UCC local churches. UCC congregational leaders must create and maintain operational By-Laws, there is no national "Book of Order." One of the significant efforts of this congregation's federation was the drafting of By-Laws that met with the approval by both the UCC and PCUSA.

I'm excited to share the basics of our federated congregation this Fall through a series of Brown-Bag Lunches that will explore our history, our commitments, and our ministry together. Hope to see you there!

Blessings, Martha



[www.secondfirst.org](http://www.secondfirst.org)



# A little Missive From Your Moderator

## The Tower

The monthly publication of

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Rockford, Illinois

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Once upon a time, I was in a West High School production of South Pacific. As Ensign Nellie Forbush, I sang a song with the lyrics. “I’m as corny as Kansas in August, high as a flag on the Fourth of July!” What gave Nellie that feeling? She sings, “I have found me a wonderful guy.” The problem in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, set in the middle of World War II, centers on diversity. Nellie’s wonderful guy is a French plantation owner with two Polynesian children. Prejudice being what it was (is), Nellie is compromised. At the same time, Lt. Joseph Cable falls for the beautiful Liat, setting up his own societal dilemma. Together the two share their frustrations when Cable discloses how they had been “carefully taught.” The song reveals his understanding that prejudice is not something born in a person but systematically taught.

This may have been my early introduction to the controversy but unfortunately the world hasn’t advanced so very far from those lessons. I like to think that here at SecondFirst church we are daily taking steps to embrace diversity – even beyond the issues of that 1949 stage show. We have an active, hard-working committee formulating the language which will be presented to the congregation for their approval and will confirm us as an Open & Affirming church.

Kris Delmore’s sermon July 13th centered on the text of the Good Samaritan. Her approach suggested a new perspective to me, focusing the story around neighbors. Second Congregational/First Presbyterian Church is all about our commitment to our neighbors - Serious Soup, the Over-Night Café, Jeremiah Development, our Thrift Shop, Jubilee Soup Kitchen, Haskell Boot Project, support of K-Fact and El Shaddai and more projects I may have missed.

“Who is my neighbor?” isn’t a trick question in the teachings of Jesus. It has a simple answer - those around us to whom we can show care and compassion, not based on geography or status or ethnicity or life choices. I believe this church has taken that lesson to heart and with the help of God, will continue to follow Jesus’s commandment, emerging from the parable of the Good Samaritan, to “go and do likewise.”

Yours,  
Linda Oshita

## Mission News

THANKS to all who contributed peanut butter and funds for peanut butter for the Rock River Food Pantry! We thought you would like to know what our efforts and our Rockford community contributed to -- "the Pantry in total raised \$5,206.25 and collected 3,520 pounds of peanut butter and jelly. That’s the equivalent of 6,638 jars going to families in need this summer across our community." Please know that all of our food donations help those in our community.





# Family Outing to Hurricane Harbor

We are excited to invite families out to a day at Hurricane Harbor, located near the CherryVale Mall.

This is of course weather permitting, there is not currently a rain date.

Costs are \$30 per ticket. Parking \$20.

**When:** Monday August 4th at 10-1015 am

**Where:** Meet inside the gate by locker rooms. Parking is usually manageable, sometimes there is a line, but it moves fairly quickly. Please text as you arrive.

**What to Bring:** sunscreen, towel, \$ for drinks, change of clothes

**PLEASE NOTE:** The park's website states **Six Flags only accepts card payments. Cash is not accepted.**

**RSVP:** Please let Aubrey Barnett know if you are interested in coming- we want to make sure to stay in touch.  
**815-519-3817**

We look forward to a sun and water filled day of joy!

For information about the park itself visit: <https://www.sixflags.com/hurricaneharborrockford>



# Save the Date!

[August 4th - Family outing to Hurricane Harbor](#)

Hurricane Harbor (Near Cherryvale Mall) opens at 11:00am, so we would like to meet everyone who will attend at the gate around 10:45. More details are on Page 6!

[Sunday August 10th– Blessing of the Backpacks](#)

We will have more details regarding the Blessing of the Backpacks. All of the students going back to school this fall should bring in their backpacks so they can be blessed for the following school year!

[Sunday, August 17th– Church Picnic](#)

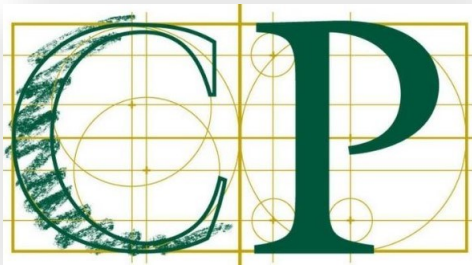
After church service, we will have our annual church picnic at Anna Page Park. We would like to do a potluck and have plenty of food to share with everyone attending! A signup sheet will be created for those that wish to bring a dish to pass. Last names beginning with letters A through M can bring sides or salads, and N through Z can bring desserts. There will be plant-based and non plant-based Hot Dogs and Brats.

# Overnight Cafe

Carpenter's Place is recognizing our Overnight Cafe with the Guardian Award at their upcoming 25th Anniversary!

Thanks to all who have supported our program! Planning is starting soon for our 2026 Winter program.

Pastor Becky Erbe will be leading our efforts!



# KFACT

THANKS to those who have written cards of support for Laneice! We could use a few more to accompany the gift cards she will be receiving from our Mission Team. She'll be heading to Georgia mid-August to begin her college career. Cards can be placed in the Mission Team mailbox in the church office. We wish her all the best with this next step in her education!



## COLLEGE PLANS COMPLETE

Laneice graduated from Auburn High School

Attending Albany State University in Georgia this fall!

Major: Undecided

KFACT SCHOLARS




Sometimes, The Table Comes To You.



Whoever you are...  
Wherever you're from...  
Whatever you believe...  
Whatever doubts and joys  
you bring...  
Whoever you love...

You Are Welcome Here



SecondFirst  
CHURCH

[www.secondfirst.org](http://www.secondfirst.org)

Among life’s circumstances are those that prevent us from gathering with the SecondFirst community on a Sunday morning. We offer streaming worship services on our YouTube channel and— for those whose health or mobility are keeping them home —our Deacons Fellowship leads a Home Communion Ministry.

We believe that Jesus is present to us in the sacrament, that it sustains our faith, and that it unites us to God and to one another. Because of this, the deacons and other caring partners take elements from the communion table on Communion Sunday and bring them to members who are unable to be physically present in worship.

This ministry rises out of a desire to nurture our sense of connection to God through the sacrament and our sense of belonging to one another. As I like to say, sometimes we come to the Table of Jesus Christ and sometimes the Table comes to us.

If you are unable to attend in-person worship and would like to receive Home Communion, please be in touch with Pastor Martha ([martha.langford@secondfirst.org](mailto:martha.langford@secondfirst.org) or 979.208.9609).

If you’re reading this in the digital PDF version, click the pic to go to our YouTube page----->



August 2025 Calendar

<b>Friday, Aug 1</b> 8:00 AM- Park District Office is Closed	<b>Monday, Aug 11</b> 11:30 AM - Serious Soup 5:30 PM - Deacons/Fellowship	<b>Thursday, Aug 21</b> 7:30 PM - El Shaddai (Heritage Library)
<b>Saturday, Aug 2</b> 9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic	<b>Tuesday, Aug 12</b> 9:00 AM - Thrift Shop 5:00 PM - Adult Christian Ed	<b>Friday, Aug 22</b> Office is Closed
<b>Sunday, Aug 3</b> 10:00 AM – Worship Service w/ Communion 10:20 AM – Sunday School	<b>Wednesday, Aug 13</b> 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting	<b>Saturday, Aug 23</b> No Scheduled Activities
<b>Monday, Aug 4</b> 8:00 AM - Park District 11:30 AM - Serious Soup 12:30 PM - Hospitality	<b>Thursday, Aug 14</b> 9:30 AM - Carillons 7:30 PM - El Shaddai (Heritage Library)	<b>Sunday, Aug 24</b> 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School
<b>Tuesday, Aug 5</b> 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 AM- Park District	<b>Friday, Aug 15</b> Office Closed 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast 8:00 AM- Park District	<b>Monday, Aug 25</b> 11:30 AM - Serious Soup 6:30 PM - Worship/Music (zoom)
<b>Wednesday, Aug 6</b> 8:00 AM- Park District 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting	<b>Saturday, Aug 16</b> 8:00 AM- Jeremiah Development Event 9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic	<b>Tuesday, Aug 26</b> 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
<b>Thursday, Aug 7</b> 8:00 AM- Park District 5:00 PM - Foundation Meeting 7:30 PM - El Shaddai (Heritage Library)	<b>Sunday, Aug 17</b> 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:30 AM - Church Picnic	<b>Wednesday, Aug 27</b> 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
<b>Friday, Aug 8</b> 8:00 AM- Park District Office is Closed	<b>Thursday, Aug 28</b> 5:30 PM - DVT 7:30 PM - EL Shaddai (Heritage Library)	<b>Friday, Aug 29</b> Office is Closed
<b>Saturday, Aug 9</b> No Scheduled Activities	<b>Monday, Aug 18</b> 11:30 AM - Serious Soup	<b>Saturday, Aug 30</b> 9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic
<b>Sunday, Aug 10</b> 10:00 AM – Worship Service/ Blessings of the Backpacks 10:20 AM – Sunday School	<b>Tuesday, Aug 19</b> 7:00 Am - Men’s Prayer Breakfast	<b>Sunday, Aug 31</b> 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School
	<b>Wednesday, Aug 20</b> 10:00 AM - Staff Meeting 6:00 PM - Trustees	

*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.