

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church
PC(USA)
318 N. Church Street, Rockford IL 61101
(815)963-8431
www.secondfirst.org
www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch/

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



May 2026 the tower

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace



Martha's Mental Space...



Sunrise or sunset? Yes.

Commencement, I love this word. It rolls off the tongue and has enough syllables to sound significant. We use the words “commencement exercise” to name the ceremonies that mark school graduations and I’ve always wondered about both those words.

Commencements are a beginning, a starting point, the introduction of something new. Yet each beginning, starting point, and kick-off is a transition that often brings the conclusion or end of something else.

May is a month of commencements at SecondFirst. We welcome new leadership, we recognize graduates, and this May on the 17th we will witness the ordination of Becky Erbe, as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the United Church of Christ. That’s a pretty big commencement and we rejoice with Becky on this milestone in her faith journey!

Yet we know that transition and change can be difficult. New leaders need seasoning in their positions and help from experienced hands. Graduates need support as they make their way into new schools or new jobs or into uncertain futures. I think that’s where the “exercise” part comes in. As we move forward into a new season, there is always work to be done.

In the days and months ahead, I challenge us all to consider how we will support the transitions going on around us and in us. We might all answer the question: What attitude and what skills might we use to say our farewells and our most welcoming hellos?

May is also bringing transitions for me. On the 24th, I will be officially installed by the United Church of Christ here at SecondFirst as a minister with dual standing. This certification has been a labor of love, done so that I might more fully serve this federated congregation.

May also marks the time when I will be fully moved into my new home here in Rockford. Hallelujah and I are adjusting to the new spaces and places—finding the rhythm of life in the midst of the transition.

God of endings and beginnings, give us comfort when change brings sadness. Give us courage when change brings challenge. Give us peace when there is uncertainty. Give us hope in your love and care. Give us strength for the work before us. May our commencement exercises bless us this day and each day. AMEN.

Blessings,

Martha



Our SecondFirst PRIDE Swag is available at
https://stores.inksoft.com/second_first/shop/home

www.secondfirst.org

From the New(ish) Moderator, Bob Langford

I would like to thank you for allowing me a second experience as moderator. I probably need a time or two to get it right! In the next months, I will try to pick relevant issues to our church life. Next month the topic will be - Aging and its role in the church experience. If you have questions or concerns, I would ask you to contact me at 815-985-7623 or rrlang44@yahoo.com. I am looking forward to a year of faith, fun, and exploration.

ONA (Open & Affirming)

At SecondFirst Church of Rockford, we joyfully affirm that every person is a beloved child of God. We embrace the rich diversity of God's creation and celebrate the uniqueness of every individual—regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, relationship status, physical or mental ability, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, age, or background.

As a proclaimed Open and Affirming congregation, we welcome all into the full life, leadership, and ministries of our community. We are committed to building a chosen church family that nurtures justice, fosters compassion, and practices expansive hospitality, as modeled by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Here, you are loved. Here, you belong. Welcome Home.

ONA is making plans to be 'ready' for Pride Month in June!! We want you to have the month of May to prepare! On Sat, June 6, we'll be lining up for the PRIDE Parade at 11am, and stepping off at noon. This will be the 3rd Annual Rockford PRIDE Parade, and our 2nd year to participate! Members of the congregation are invited to join in on the fun. More details will follow as the date nears.

Here, you are loved
Here, you belong.
Welcome home

AND, maybe you aren't one to walk in parades but still want to be supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community. ONA will be collecting donations for the Liam Foundation, our local resource center. Collection boxes will be available in June. Their needs include: snacks and drinks(personal-sized) hygiene items- body wash, shampoo, shaving cream, razors, tampons, Center needs- paper plates, napkins, plasticware, toilet paper, paper towels, 13 gallon trash bags, Clothing needs-new socks and underwear, and/or gently used shoes. Ideas for educational opportunities are in the works!

Thanks,
Karen Hill

Greeters for May

3 - Steve and Peg Showers
10 - Jennifer Archer and Family
17 - Phil and Shirley Davidson
24 - Peter and Ann Boline



the tower

The monthly publication of

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL
UCC/FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)
Rockford, Illinois

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Family Christian Education News

We had a joyful and full Easter season! The children delighted in their baskets, lifted their voices in three songs for Ring in Spring, and completed our large wall map of Israel, highlighting the places where Jesus lived and carried out his healing ministry. One new addition this year was a photo backdrop, inviting everyone to pause and capture the moment together. A big thank you to Sarah, Jess, and Nick for building it, and to Aubrey for providing the frame—made possible through last year's Golden Apple Grant!

Now our focus turns to Youth Worship Sunday on Mother's Day. The children have been busy creating coffee filter flowers for a fresh backdrop, and they are preparing a hymn for the offertory. We'll even be bringing back the matching robes! Madeline will be preaching that morning—be sure to join us in person or tune in online if you're away.

Meanwhile, FCE has been hard at work planning a summer full of fun:

- Volcano Falls outing – May 31
- Rock Cut fishing trip – tentatively June 28
- Hurricane Harbor – July 17
- Family Pool Party at Ms. Sarah's – July 19
-

We are also working on plans for a Beloit Sky Carp game—keep an eye out for more details on this intergenerational event!

We look forward to celebrating Youth Worship together and hope you'll join us.





Celebrate GRADUATION SUNDAY

AT SECOND FIRST CHURCH

Join us in honoring our graduates!



CELEBRATED ON
JUNE 14



CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE BY JUNE 5TH
WITH YOUR GRADUATE'S INFORMATION

Let's celebrate their hard work and achievements!



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
SECONDFIRSTWEINGARTNER 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 _____

ESTIIMATED 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:

Calling students pursuing post-secondary education!

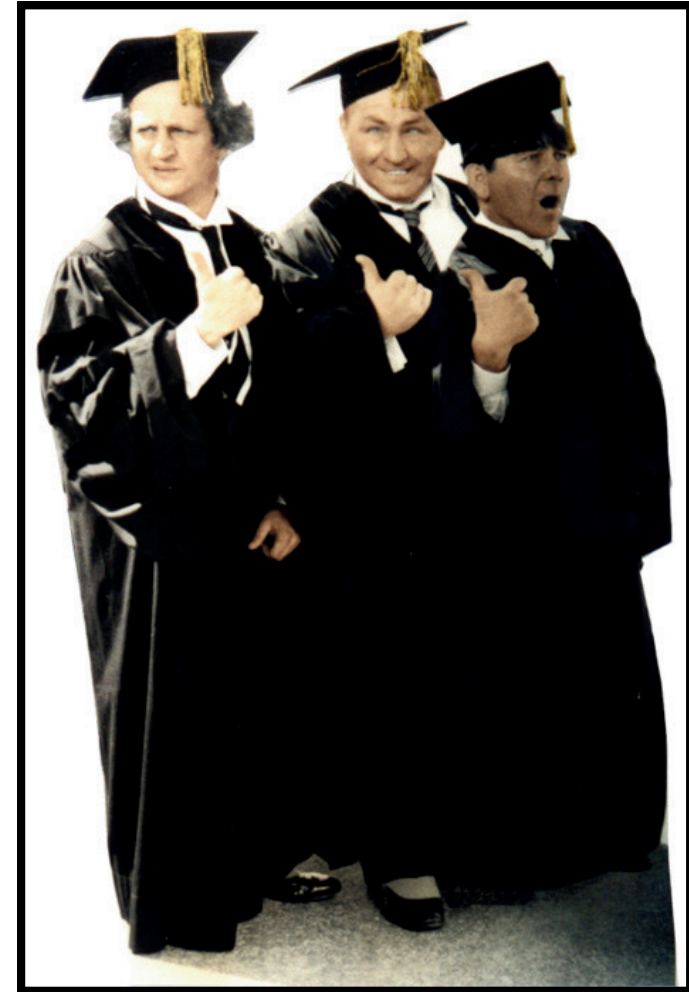
Second-First Church has scholarships available to support you as you further your education. Funds can be used for 4-year universities, community college, and/or trade school. If you are a member of Second-First, you are eligible to apply, and applicants may apply yearly. Applications for the Second First Weingartner Scholarship are now being accepted and are available at the link below, or you may contact the office to receive one. This year's applications are due by May 31st.

[Click/Tap Here for the application \(PDF Download\)](#) if on digital version. Or see Page 6 of this newsletter for a paper copy.

Church members, are you looking for a way to help the youth of our church? Consider making a donation to the Second First Weingartner Scholarship Fund so that we can continue to award scholarships to future students!

Your 2026 Scholarship Committee is Greg Makulec, Karen Hill, Shirley Davidson, and Jim Delmore

Ordination of Pastor Becky Erbe - May 17th



Pastor Becky will become Reverend Becky on May 17th at 3:00 PM in SecondFirst Church's Sanctuary, with a reception following.

May 2026 Music:
May 3 - Choir
May 10 - Children
May 17 - Carillons
May 24 - Quartet
May 31 - Hymn Sing

April was a busy month for music. Easter service with brass and the very next week was Ring In Spring, the annual handbell concert. May will include Carillons, a quartet on Pentecost, May 24, and a hymn sing on the last Sunday of the month. Anyone interested in providing music over the summer, please contact Valerie at valerie.blair@secondfirst.org. As always, at this time of year, as choir and bells wind down, I am feeling grateful for the dedication of the people who sing and ring in all our groups. Thank you all for your service and fellowship this past year.

On Monday, June 8th, we will be hosting the Wesley Bell Ringers of Christ UMC in Salt Lake City, Utah. This group of 18 young people are touring the Northeast this year, and had a last minute change in their schedule, hence the late notice. They will arrive around 4 pm., set up and rehearse, then have dinner and present a concert at 7:30 p.m., with a freewill offering. Then they will sleep here overnight, have breakfast in the morning, and be on their way. Check out their website: <https://www.thewesleybellringers.com/> This is a very exciting opportunity, and I know this church will feed them well and welcome them warmly.

Next Jubilee Soup Kitchen: July 18 , 2026

We will gather at the Jubilee Center (the small building in the Emmanuel Episcopal Church parking lot) at 10 am. We will prepare, serve, and clean up a delicious lunch which is available to any person who walks through the door that day. While we work hard, our time is filled with laughter, and conversations, and the blessings we give to our hungry neighbors and those we receive in thanks from them. We are truly blessed to be able to participate in this hands-on ministry! If you are able to help, let Marge Maynard know. Thank you.

Here are some pics of the last Jubilee Soup Kitchen which just took place on Saturday, May 2nd!



May 2026 Calendar

Sunday, May 3 8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School	Tuesday, May 12 7:00 AM- Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM- Thrift Shop 4:30 PM- Adult Christian Ed	Thursday, May 21 7:00 PM- Choir 7:30 PM- El Shaddai
Monday, May 4 11:30 AM- Serious Soup 12:30 PM- Hospitality Meeting 5:00 PM- Foundation Meeting (zoom)	Wednesday, May 13 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting	Friday, May 22 Office is Closed
Tuesday, May 5 7:00 AM- Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 4:30 PM- Overnight Café Meeting	Thursday, May 14 9:30 AM- Carillons 7:00 PM- Choir 7:30 PM- El Shaddai	Saturday, May 23 Building is Closed
Wednesday, May 6 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting	Friday, May 15 Office is Closed	Sunday, May 24 8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 3:00 PM- UCC Installation
Thursday, May 7 9:30 AM- Carillons 7:00 PM- Choir 7:30 PM- El Shaddai	Saturday, May 16 1:00 PM- Carillons 1:00 PM- Houses of Worship Tour	Monday, May 25 Building is Closed
Friday, May 8 Office is Closed	Sunday, May 17 8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School 11:15 AM- Family Christian Ed 11:20- ONA Meeting 3:00 PM- Ordination	Tuesday, May 26 7:00 AM- Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop 4:30 PM- Adult Christian Ed
Saturday, May 9 9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic	Monday, May 18 11:30 AM- Serious Soup 5:30 PM- Missions	Wednesday, May 27 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting
Sunday, May 10 Youth Service Noisy Offering 8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class 10:00 AM – Worship Service 10:20 AM – Sunday School	Tuesday, May 19 7:00 AM- Men’s Prayer Breakfast 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop	Thursday, May 28 9:30 AM- Carillons 5:30 PM- Governing Council 7:00 PM- Choir 7:30 PM- El Shaddai
Monday, May 11 11:30 AM- Serious Soup 2:00 PM- Camerata Emanon Board Meeting 5:30 PM- Deacons/Fellowship	Wednesday, May 20 10:00 AM- Staff Meeting 6:00 PM- Trustees	Friday, May 29 Office Closed
		Friday, May 30 Building Closed
		Friday, May 31 Music Sunday 8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class 10:00 AM- Worship Service 10:20 AM- Sunday School

times/dates/events subject to change