



June 2026

the tower

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace



Martha's Mental Space...

Summer in the Arts

The kinds of truth that art gives us many, many times are small truths. They don't have the resonance of an encyclical from the Pope stating an eternal truth, but they partake of the quality of eternity. There is a sort of timeless delight in them.

-Seamus Heaney

Long ago, someone taught me the spiritual practice of gazing into art known as Visio

Divina. Spending time with a visual image, one asks:

- What surprised you?
- What captivated you?
- Where does your gaze linger?
- What emotions did it stir up?
- What thoughts, feelings, connections did you have?
- What stories did it tell?

Yes, the practice gave insight into the artwork, but more importantly was the spiritual connection found in deep contemplation.

Art invites us into a conversation, into contemplation, and it reveals not only the deepest parts of ourselves, but it can also give us a glimpse of truth about God. This summer in worship, we will explore biblical texts through the eyes and ears and voices of the arts—through works of poetry, prose, paintings, and Psalms.

Visio Divina as a spiritual practice expanded my vision from framed icons, pictures, and photos to the world around me where God's wonder is on display day after day.

Visio Divina as a spiritual practice expanded my vision from framed icons, pictures, and photos to the world around me where God's wonder is on display day after day. It is my hope that the sensory element of art will widen our vision even as it focuses our hearts on the divine.

June: Poets

7 Jun Genesis 1:24-31 What Is It You Plan?

14 Jun Amos 4:7-9, 20-24 "I Have a Dream"

21 Jun 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 Shining Lights and Cracked Pots

28 Jun Colosians 1:15-17 From Whence It Came

July: Painters

4 Jul Isaiah 11:1-9 Kin'dom Peace

12 Jul Guest Preacher

19 Jul John 12:28-38 Truth

26 Jul Matthew 8:23-27 Into the Storm

August: Psalmists

2 Aug Psalm 100 Now Thank We All Our God

9 Aug Psalm 90 O God, Our Help in Ages Past

16 Aug Psalm 103 It Is Well with My Soul

23 Aug Psalm 133 We Are One in the Spirit

30 Aug Psalm 16 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Blessings,

Martha

Moderator's Message

It has been several years since I served as moderator. During that time period our methods of communication have changed, some good, some not so good! Before Covid, almost all meetings were done in-person. Since then, we meet in three distinctly different ways- in-person, hybrid, or online. Each style of communication has both positive and negative factors. I became interested in which style was more effective according to the situation.

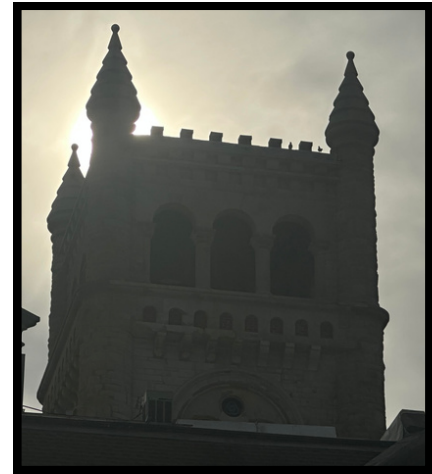
In-person is best used for complex issues and where there may be emotion connected to decisions. People brainstorm more effectively person to person (15-20%). Relationships develop more effectively in person to person meetings. The negative aspects of the in-person meetings are that they take more planning (getting everybody in the same place at the same time) and it is at times difficult to focus the group on the task.

Hybrid meetings have the most of the benefits of in-person meetings. The negative aspects are the distractibility issue of stimuli in their environment causing difficulty to remain on task, and, of course, technical difficulties! The very positive aspect is that people can participate who may be unable to appear in person.

The meeting that is totally remote is best used for meetings that are based on communication and not decision making. The advantage is that meetings can be held on short notice involving the maximum number of people.

- Just the thoughts of an old moderator trying to adjust!

Bob Langford



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Family Christian Education News



On May 31st, we had a great day of fun and fellowship at our SecondFirst Family Meet-Up at Volcano Falls Adventure Park!

Past and Future Events



Youth Sunday - Mother's Day
May 10, 2026



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!

The Wesley Bell Ringers
IN CONCERT

**MON • JUNE 8
7:30 PM**

Second First Church
318 N. Church Street
Rockford, IL 61101

Music Notes by Valerie Blair

June 2026 Music Notes:

Even though our regular groups are not sharing in worship right now, we are still a busy church, musically. We are hosting the Wesley Bell Ringers for a concert on June 8, and June 15-19 the American Guild of Organists will be using the organ for their POE+, Pipe Organ Encounter for Adults. We have done this several times in the past, and a POE+ in 2011 is where I got my start in becoming an organist. Bob Bates will be sharing his organ mastery on June 14th and 21st, when I am on vacation.

Martha's summer series Poets, Painters, and Psalms offers so many possibilities for interesting and engaging musical selections. There are several openings for sharing music over the summer, and I know we will have a wonderful variety as always. Please contact me valerie.blair@secondfirst.org if you are interested

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!



June 2026 Calendar

Wednesday, June 3

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 4

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, June 5

Building is Closed

Saturday, June 6

9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic

11:00 AM- Rockford Pride

Parade

Sunday, June 7

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

11:15 AM- Deacons/Fellowship

Monday, June 8

8:00 AM- Park District

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

7:30 PM- Youth Bell Choir

Tuesday, June 9

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer

Breakfast

8:00 AM- Park District

Wednesday, June 10

8:00 AM- Park District

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 11

8:00 AM- Park District

7:00 PM- El Shaddai Clothes

Giveaway

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, June 12

8:00 AM- Park District

Saturday, June 13

Building is Closed

Sunday, June 14

Graduation Sunday

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

11:15 AM- ONA Meeting

11:15 AM- FCE Meeting

Monday, June 15

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

9:00 AM- POE+ (Sanctuary)

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

5:30 PM- Missions

Tuesday, June 16

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer

Breakfast

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

9:00 AM- POE+ (Sanctuary)

Wednesday, June 17

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

9:00 AM- POE+ (Sanctuary)

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

6:00 PM- Trustees

7:00 PM- AGO Concert

Thursday, June 18

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

9:30 AM- Carillons

5:30 PM- DVT

7:00 PM- El Shaddai Community

Baby Shower

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, June 19

8:00 AM- Park District

Saturday, June 20

9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic

Sunday, June 21

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, June 22

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

5:45 PM- Worship/Music

Tuesday, June 23

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer

Breakfast

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

Wednesday, June 24

8:00 AM- Rockford Park District

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, June 25

8:00 AM- Park District

5:30 PM- Jeremiah

Development Networking Event

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, June 26

8:00 AM- Park District

Saturday, June 27

Building is Closed

Sunday, June 28

8:30 AM- Adult Coffee Class

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

12:00 PM- Youth Fishing Trip

Monday, June 29

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Tuesday, June 30

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer

Breakfast

times/dates/events subject to change

Celebrating the Pipe Organ in Rockford

Five Organ Programs

Seven Exceptional Organists

Sunday
June 14 at 7:30pm
Holy Family Church
Buzard Organ
Opening Concert
Katelyn Emerson

Tuesday
June 16 at 7:00 pm
Trinity Lutheran Church
Casavant Organ
Hymn Festival
David Cherwien

Thursday
June 18 at 7:00pm
Holy Family Church
Buzard Organ
Closing Concert
Andrew Schaeffer

Monday
June 15 at 7:00 pm
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
Austin Organ
Matthew Haider
John Wigal

Wednesday
June 17 at 7:00pm
Second/First Church
Skinner Organ
Carol Feather-Martin
Rhonda Edgington

Admission is FREE
Freewill Offering Instead

These programs are part of the **Pipe Organ Encounter Plus 2026** – a week of
instructive programs to expand pipe organ knowledge for the adult learner
Presented by **The Rockford Chapter of American Guild of Organists**

June Is Pride Month!

Pride month originated to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising, a series of spontaneous protests against police harassment that began on June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York.

The First Pride March (June 1970) marked the one-year anniversary of the uprising where thousands of people marched through Manhattan to Central Park and is regarded as the nation's first gay pride parade.

President Bill Clinton officially declared June as "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month" in 1999.

President Barack Obama expanded the designation to "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month" in 2011.

The ONA Ministry Team has been busy making plans for ways we can all commemorate Pride Month with our LGBTQ+ community:

1. Rockford Area Pride Parade
 - a. A peaceful demonstration June 6, 2026 at 11:00 AM in Downtown Rockford
 - b. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Narthex for participants to receive the meet up location details from Karen Hill as soon as that is made available to share.
2. Donations for Liam Foundation
 - a. Boxes will be available to collect toiletries, socks, paper plates, disposable cups.
3. ONA Coalition Affirming Sunday, June 28, 2026
 - a. More information to follow about how our church will celebrate with nearly 2,000 ONA UCC churches nationwide.

The Team:

Karen Hill, Holly Hegge, Sally Etheridge, Marge Maynard, Jennifer Archer, Bob Bates Lindsey Landcaster, Linda Mohaupt

HOW can we be supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community? ONA will be collecting donations for the Liam Foundation, our local resource center. Look for our decorated collection boxes. The challenge is on to see how many we can fill! Their needs include: snacks and drinks(personal-sized) hygiene items (trial and regular-sized)- 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.

ONA Coalition Sunday will be June 28! For the first time in our church's history, SecondFirst will be celebrating ONA Coalition Sunday on June 28! We are excited to be joining other UCC ONA congregations in this celebration. Our ONA Ministry Team will be keeping you posted on upcoming opportunities!

SecondFirst Church and the PRIDE Parade!

Join us on June 6, 11:00am line-up, 12 step-off.

Members are invited to gather at our church parking lot at 10:40am to ride our bus over to the line-up. We'll be joining others from Jeremiah Development and handing out buttons! Sign up with Karen Hill or on the sign in the south entry.

Greeters for June

7 - Tim and Darlene Riddle
14 - Audrey Williams
21 - Rick Gallegos & Blythe Hamilton
28 - John DeWaters

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church
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www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch/

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Rockford, Illinois



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

www.secondfirst.org