

Dog Days of Summer

Growing up in Texas, my grandmother would call hot summer days, "Dog Days." Watching her ancient dachshund, I wondered about what made the days special for dogs. Later, someone (probably my brother) explained that it was about the ways dogs lazed around in the heat. Ohhhhhh! DOG days.

But that's not the real story.

Ancient astronomers called these "Dog Days" because the star Sirius appeared during daytime rising with the sun during the hottest days of the year. Being cause and effect kind of people who looked to the stars for answers, those ancient astronomers imagined that the heat from Sirius added to the heat of the sun and made the world that much hotter. This brightest star in Canis Major was nicknamed the "Dog" star, SO... DOG days.

Ancient Egyptians noticed something else. The star we call Sirius appears at sunrise, just before the Nile River floods each year. In ancient Egypt, the rise of this star marked the beginning of a new year.

This year the Old Farmer's Almanac lists July 3 to August 11 as the "dog days of summer."

In Northern Illinois, we can feel the truth that the Summer Solstice has come and gone. Sunrise comes later; sunset comes earlier. Summer is waning even as things heat up. The change in seasons is on its way.

Greeters for August

2 - Ann Stites
9 - Nancy Marvell & Janet Novak
16 - George & Linda Johnson
23 - Bill & Sally Hoff - Picnic
30 - Mark & Anne Stratemeyer



Like many churches, SecondFirst runs on several "calendars." We use the January through December "year" to organize our budget and finances. We use the May through

April "year" to organize our Ministry Teams. We use the August through May school "year" to organize our programs. We use the December through November "year" (Advent through Reign of Christ Sundays) to organize our worship life.

In one trip around the sun, we experience four, new years.

Sirius is in the morning sky as we prepare for our new Program Year. SecondFirst will bless our children and youth on August 2nd, as they prepare to go back to school.

And I wonder... what new thing might this beginning bring to us all?

But let me encourage us all—give the Dog Days their due. Let summer linger. Find moments for beautiful idleness and refreshing respite. Regather your energy and enthusiasm for the challenges to come. Be blessed in this season and the year to come.

Peace,

Martha



ROCKFORD STREET MEDICINE

Who are we?

We deliver free, compassionate, relationship-centered care to individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Working alongside physicians, residents, medical students, and community partners, volunteers meet people where they are—in encampments, shelters, and other community settings—to provide basic medical care, health screenings, wound care, hygiene supplies, clothing, food, and connections to healthcare and social services.

Our mission

Our mission is to reduce barriers by bringing healthcare to people directly where they are, while building trust through consistent, respectful outreach. Through service, education, and advocacy, the program prepares future healthcare professionals to care for underserved populations with dignity, empathy, and a commitment to health equity.

What we bring

- Medications
- Hygiene items
- Non-Perishable snacks & water
- Harm reduction supplies
- Socks, gloves, hats, ponchos, hand warmers
- Basic first-aid items
- Clothes, shoes, jackets



Current Data

- First Medical Run: **1/7/2026**
- Total Runs: **47**
- Total Encounters: **954**
- Avg. Encounters Per Run: **20.7**
- Total Volunteers: **49**
- Total Service Hours: **684**
- Economic Impact: **\$22,907.16**

**as of 6/10/2026*

Can you help us!

✉ rockfordstreetmedicine@gmail.com

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the tower

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**AUGUST 7
(FRIDAY) 1-4 PM**

"Second First Church"
Second Congregational
UCC/First Presbyterian
Church)
318 N. Church Street

WHAT WE DO

We can set you up to see a doctor on
the street (they come to you!)

Items

Hygiene, First Aid, skin care,
clothes, and much more.

Who Are We?

The group walking around downtown
with the backpacks & carts every week!

Church Picnic August 23rd!

Come one, come all, to the annual church picnic, plus!

On Sunday, August 23rd, our church family and friends will congregate at the Anna Page Park Shelter (off Springfield Road) for a morning of worship, fellowship, food and fun!

Worship time will begin at 10:30 in the shelter, probably with local birds joining the chorus of our hymns. Coffee and cookies will be available in case your tummy is growling over the smell of the brats and hot dogs grilling.

Deacons Fellowship Team will be hosting and cooking, offering both meat and plant-based sausages and links, potato salad, chips, condiments, lemonade and ice water for dining after the shorter service.

For the potluck portion of our picnic, if your last name begins with A-M, please bring a dessert to share; if it begins with N-Z, please bring a side or salad. Paper goods and cutlery will be provided.

There will be activities for kids of all ages and there's a great playground close by.

Because this is such a large shelter, we can gather rain or shine.

Last year's picnickers seen below, thanks to Greg Makulec's drone.

Come join the happy crowd on August 23 rd!

Tower Hill Camp pics



Taking Photos That Share Our Story

Quick Guidelines for Capturing Church Events at SecondFirst

Your photos help us celebrate fellowship, share what SecondFirst and our ministries are doing in our community, and welcome others. Great photos make our newsletters, Facebook, website, and other media more vibrant and meaningful.

These quick pointers will help your pictures turn out better for publication. They're simple habits — no professional photography skills required!

1. Include People — Not Just Empty Tables or Setups

Tip: Whenever possible, capture people in the photos: smiling faces, conversations, kids playing, groups interacting around tables or during activities. Avoid shots that only show empty tables, decorations, or room setups.

Why it helps: *Photos of people show the heart of our church — the warmth, laughter, and real connections. Empty scenes miss the story of community and fellowship that draws others in and preserves meaningful memories.*

2. Aim for Faces, Not Backs of Heads

Tip: Position yourself so you can see people's faces and expressions clearly. Walk around to the front or side of a group if needed rather than shooting mostly from behind.

Why it helps: *Faces convey emotion, joy, worship, and connection. Photos showing mostly backs feel impersonal and distant. Viewers connect much more strongly when they can see the people and their expressions.*

3. Frame Thoughtfully — Eye Level & Fill the Frame

Tip: Hold your phone or camera at about eye level (or slightly above for larger groups). Get closer to the action or use your zoom instead of standing far back. Avoid lots of ceiling above or floor below — fill the frame with the people and the moment.

Why it helps: *Eye-level, well-composed shots look natural and balanced. They keep the focus on what matters most and avoid awkward empty space or distracting angles that make photos feel less engaging or professional.*

4. Pay Attention to Lighting

Tip: Make sure faces are well lit. Turn on indoor lights if the room is dim. Avoid having bright windows or strong lights directly behind people (they'll turn into dark silhouettes). Move to brighter spots when possible.

Why it helps: *Good lighting makes photos bright, clear, and inviting. Poorly lit or backlit shots can look gloomy, shadowy, or washed out — and they often don't reproduce well online or in printed newsletters.*

5. Take Plenty of Photos from Different Angles

Tip: Don't hesitate to take lots of shots— from different positions, distances, and moments. Capture both candid interactions and a few posed group photos. You can always delete extras later!

Why it helps: *More photos give us more great options. It greatly increases the chance of getting that perfect shot with good expressions, lighting, and composition. Our media team can then choose the very best ones to share.*

A Few More Quick Tips

- **Steady hands:** Hold your phone with both hands or gently brace your elbows against your body (or a wall/table) to reduce blur.
- **Vertical vs. horizontal:** Vertical (portrait) photos often work great for Facebook posts, stories, and mobile viewing.
- **Candid moments:** Some of the best photos are unposed — laughter, hugs, kids being kids, someone praying or serving. These often tell the real story best.
- **Respect privacy:** If someone prefers not to be in photos, kindly respect their wishes. Most people at church events are happy to be included, but always be gracious.

Your photos are a real blessing and an important part of our ministry! They help preserve memories and spread the good news of what God is doing in our church family. If you have questions about what kinds of photos we're looking for, or if you'd like feedback on photos you've taken, please reach out to our Media Team (Charles) at graphicdesign@secondfirst.org.

Great example below; Jubilee Soup from July 18. Good spacing and all smiling faces! Thank you Marge Maynard for the photo!



August 2026 Calendar

Saturday, August 1

9:00 AM- Bridge Clinic

Sunday, August 2

10:00 AM – Worship Service

Blessing of the Backpacks

10:20 AM – Sunday School

11:15 AM- Deacons/Fellowship

Monday, August 3

8:00 AM- Park District

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Tuesday, August 4

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer Breakfast

8:00 AM- Park District

9:00 AM- Thrift Shop

Wednesday, August 5

8:00 AM- Park District

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 6

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, August 7

Building is Closed

Saturday, August 8

Building is Closed

Sunday, August 9

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, August 10

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Tuesday, August 11

7:00 AM - Men's Prayer

Breakfast

Wednesday, August 12

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 13

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, August 14

Building is Closed

Saturday, August 15

9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

Sunday, August 16

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

11:15 AM - Family Christian Ed

Monday, August 17

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

5:30 PM - Missions

Tuesday, August 18

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer Breakfast

Wednesday, August 19

10:00 AM - Staff Meeting

5:00 PM - Trustees

Thursday, August 20

9:30 AM - Carrillons

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, August 21

Building Is Closed

Saturday, August 22

Building is Closed

Sunday, August 23

Church Picnic

10:30 AM – Worship Service at

Anna Page Park

Monday, August 24

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Tuesday, August 25

7:00 AM- Men's Prayer Breakfast

Wednesday, August 26

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 27

5:30 PM- Governing Council

7:30 PM- El Shaddai

Friday, August 28

Building is Closed

Saturday, August 29

Building is Closed

Sunday, August 30

10:00 AM – Worship Service

10:20 AM – Sunday School

Monday, August 31

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

Music for August:

Aug 2: Jan Novak and Linda Johnson, piano duets

Aug 9: TBA

Aug 16: Marge and John Maynard with Doug Phillips

Aug 23: Music at the park String Band

Aug 30: Up North Four barbershop quartet

Important Note To All:

We have a new Facebook page. It's now under SecondFirst Rockford IL. To keep it simple, go to our original Facebook page, look for the post and you'll be able to go to the new page there!

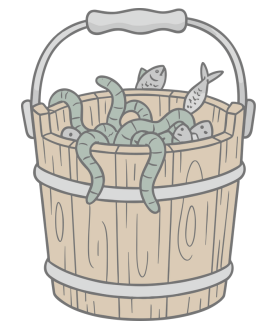
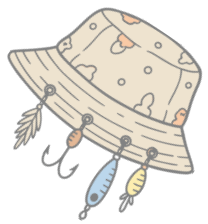
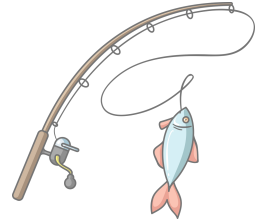
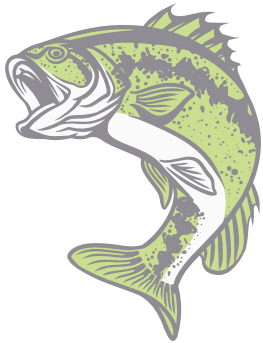
Times/Dates/Events subject to change

Family Christian Education (FCE) Summer Stuff!

What a wonderful day at our Youth Fishing Trip at Rock Cut State Park! (July 2nd, 2026)

How wonderful it is to see kids, teens, parents, grandparents, and friends enjoying being together in nature. A reminder that faith is nurtured not only in Sunday school and worship, but through time spent across generations.

Thank you to everyone who came and helped make the day such a success. A special thank you to our fishing master, Tim Riddle! We are grateful for our Second First family!



Thank you Ms. Sarah for opening your pool to our children July 19th!



ONA Donation drive continues thru August!

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.

Other Mission News: (Overnight Cafe Experience)

Save the Date! We'll be hosting our first ever "Overnight Cafe Experience" Fundraiser on Oct 15. A fun, educational dinner is being planned. The funds raised will be used to purchase sleeping mats for our winter guests. More info to follow!



Jubilee Soup Kitchen - Sept. 5th

Summer is rapidly coming to a close. For you this may mean a relief or a sadness! Days are getting shorter, but generally cooler. The trees are beginning to change color, but the summer blooms are less abundant. And it means that the Labor Day holiday nearly here. Our upcoming lunch date at the Jubilee Soup Kitchen is September 5. This is a great opportunity to add meaning to the lives of our neighbors who greatly appreciate a satisfying lunch on a Saturday! If you would like to be a member of the team, contact Marge Maynard, or let the church office know. Thanks!



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

www.secondfirst.org