



Labor of Love



Crisp mornings, changing leaves, potted mums, bird migration, school buses, football... all signals of the shift in season. In the United States one of the hallmarks of fall is Labor Day, celebrated the first Monday in September. It has its roots in Illinois.

The national recognition of workers began at the end of the nineteenth century, and it began in struggle. In May 1894, employees of Pullman Palace Car company called a strike in the Chicagoland area over wage cuts. On June 26, the American Railroad Union joined the struggle boycotting all Pullman railroad cars.

We might recognize the pattern of response: the federal government sent troops to Chicago to break the strike. Riots broke out, a dozen or more people died, Union leaders did jail time.

Hoping to mend the rift in the aftermath, Congress made Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and President Grover Cleveland signed it into law on June 28, 1894. A century later, on June 28, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill that moved Labor Day (and several other holidays) to Monday, creating a three-day weekend for the celebration.

We forget that in the heyday of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, workers often labored 12-hour days, seven days a week and that children as young as 5 or 6 labored in mills, factories, and mines for a fraction of the adult wage.

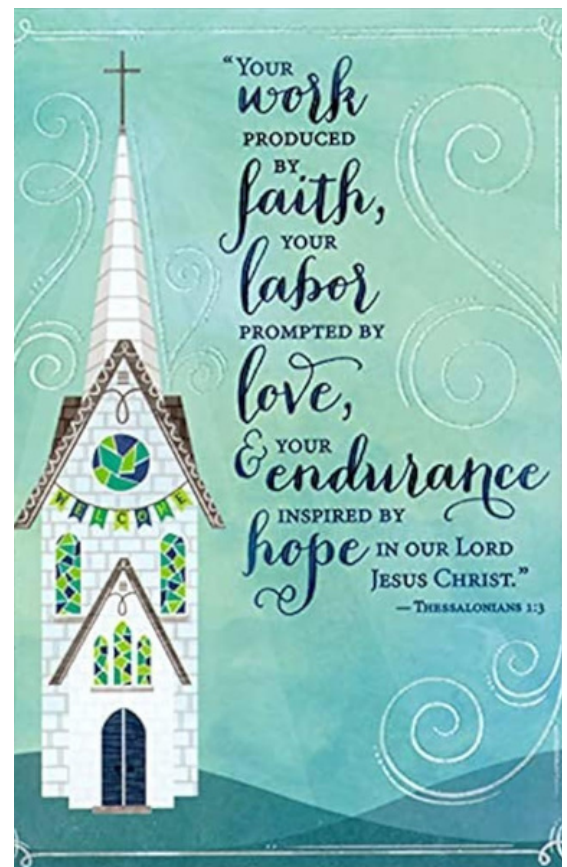
Both Presbyterians and the United Church of Christ are strongly supportive of organized labor unions that work to bring about justice in the workplace. Both denominations provide a social witness and seek the dignity and well-being of all peoples. One such witness is the work both the PC(USA) and the UCC have done with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida.

Labor Day provides a moment for reflection on the labor of the church... that is the spiritual, communal, and physical work that we do together to build up the body of Christ, to love our neighbors, to grow in our faithfulness before God.

Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica is among the earliest writings in the New Testament. Writing for himself, Silas, and Timothy, Paul begins, "We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

This Labor Day, as we head into the rush of the program season, let me express similar gratitude to you all, for the work of your hands and the fullness of your hearts.

Blessings, *Martha*



A Few Words From the (Acting) Moderator

It's September! One of my favorite Sundays of the year is Blessing of the Backpacks - when we wish all our children (and teachers) well as they head back to school. Time races on and days are full. Many of us will settle in to new schedules.

For my kids, over the years, that has meant church activities, clubs, academic teams, sports practices, music lessons and rehearsals, theater, dance, robotics, homework, friends. I'm sure you have similar recollections of your own school days or your family's daily schedules. Busy, busy. Let's just take a moment though. There's a commercial that's caught my attention recently - the driver says to the rider in the back seat, "I've always heard, if you have time to scroll, you have time to call". We could probably guess your age by how you answer this question but . . . when was the last time you called anyone just to catch up? Just to say hi? Just to say, I was thinking about you?

Even better, why not use that call to invite that person to something - coffee, a meal, a concert, a play, a volunteer opportunity, a church event? We can all reach out, say hello, open a door, open a conversation. Set a goal! Reach outside your comfort zone a little.

Who is the first person that pops into your head?

Governing Council and Discernment and Vision are focused on our communities as we head boldly into the program year. We're looking for new and creative ideas in addition to continuing to support all the ways we meet our neighbors where they are.

Thanks for all you do to create a welcoming and beautiful community at SecondFirst. See you Sunday.

Jennifer

A Quick Update on Our Newsletter Schedule

You may notice a small change at the top of your newsletter this month! To ensure everyone stays fully informed despite unpredictable postal delivery times, we are shifting to a dual-month naming system. This issue is officially titled **September–October 2026**.

Here is what you need to know about this change:

- **Full Coverage:** This issue contains all news, calendars, and events for the entire month of September, along with early highlights for October.
- **Beating the Delays:** Some members have reported receiving their copies later in the month than expected. Naming the issues this way ensures the information remains relevant and timely even if the mail runs slow.
- **Our Next Issue:** Following this format, our next edition will be labeled October–November.

Our staff works hard to prepare and send these updates out on time. We deeply appreciate your patience and grace with the postal system as we make this transition to serve you better!

Greeters for September

6 - Linda Oshita
13 - Karen Hill
20 - Sarah Hallberg
27 - Jay Baker



the tower

The monthly publication of

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ONA

THANKS so much for your generous donations for the LIAM Foundation! They are very grateful for our support.

We're sorry to share the news that Rev. Derek Terry, UCC ONA Executive Director, has passed away. He and his staff were helpful resources to our team.

Other Mission News: Pig Roast

WoW! The Pig Roast is coming up soon! On Sat, Sept 12, 3:00pm, you, church members, and our neighbors are invited to enjoy GREAT food and fellowship! Yes, we are bringing it back after taking a year off. We'll host this event along Park Ave, by our garage. IF you would like to help prepare/serve/clean-up, please let Karen Hill know, sakjhill@gmail.com.

Music Notes September 2026

As we close out the current liturgical year and anticipate the start of the new year with Advent, I am once again so grateful for the musicality of this church. We had so many wonderful volunteers for the summer music, and I heard so many compliments post-service. Thank you all!!

September will see our groups resume rehearsals, Carillons are already going, Martin Ringers will start on Sept 9, and choir on Sept 17th.

Sept 6: TBD

13th: Popup choir -- Come sing with us!

20th: Sanctuary Choir

27th: Carillons



THE OVERNIGHT CAFE EXPERIENCE: A BENEFIT

**Learn about the
Overnight Cafe,
enjoy a simple
dinner, make a
difference**

Thursday
October 15
5:30-7:30 PM

SecondFirst Church's Gym
318 North Church St
Rockford, IL 61101

**\$35/
person**

Event Sponsorships
also available

**Call or scan the QR Code
to reserve your spot!**

815-963-8431



**SecondFirst Thrift Shop
Open Tuesdays
9 AM to 1 PM**

**The Thrift Shop is back to being
open each Tuesday in
September/October.**

**We are always up for donations of
gently used clothing, shoes,
sweaters, or jackets especially
with cooler weather just around
the corner!**

**Any questions, please see
Alice Uphouse**

Thank You!

Staying Safe Online: Simple Steps to Stop Spam and Guard Your Data

Technology connects us in wonderful ways, but it also brings a lot of digital noise—like endless spam calls, junk emails, and tricky texts. Keeping your personal information safe doesn't require being a tech expert.

Here are five simple, everyday habits you can start using today to protect your privacy:

1. Spot and Stop "Phishing"

Phishing is when scammers pretend to be a company you trust (like your bank, the postal service, or even our church) to get your passwords or money.

- The Golden Rule: Never click links in unexpected emails or text messages.
- Verify First: If an email claims your account is locked, do not use the link in the message. Open your web browser, type the website address yourself, and log in securely.
- Church Reminder: Our staff will never text or email you asking for urgent favors, gift cards, or personal financial details.

2. Clean Up Your Inbox

Spam thrives when we interact with it. You can train your email account to filter out the junk.

- Use the "Spam" Button: Instead of just deleting a junk email, look for the button that says Report Spam or Mark as Junk. This teaches your email provider to block those senders in the future.
- Don't Unsubscribe From Scams: Only use the "Unsubscribe" link on emails from real companies you know (like stores you shop at). Clicking "unsubscribe" on a fake scam email just lets the scammer know your email address is active.

3. Silence Unknown Callers

You don't have to answer every time the phone rings. If a number isn't in your contacts, let it go to voicemail.

- On iPhone: Go to Settings > Phone > turn on Silence Unknown Callers.
- On Android: Open the Phone app > tap the three dots > Settings > Blocked Numbers > turn on Block Calls from Unidentified Callers.
- Why this helps: Real callers will leave a message. Scammers usually hang up.

4. Think Before You Share

Your personal details are valuable, and scammers use public information to make their tricks look believable.

- Watch Out on Social Media: Avoid participating in Facebook quizzes that ask for your first pet's name, the street you grew up on, or your birth year. These are often hidden ways to guess your security questions.
- Keep It Private: Never post your phone number, home address, or email address in public comments online.

5. Lock Your Device Automatically

If you accidentally leave your phone on a table at a restaurant or coffee shop, anyone can pick it up and look at your personal information. Setting up a quick automatic lock keeps your data private.

- Set a Short Timer: Configure your screen to turn off and lock after 1 or 2 minutes of inactivity.
- Use Simple Biometrics: If your phone offers fingerprint or facial recognition, turn it on. It is often much easier for arthritic fingers than typing a long passcode every single time, and it is incredibly secure.
- Where to find it: On *iPhone*, look under Settings > Face ID & Passcode. On *Android*, look under Settings > Security > Screen Lock.



September - Mid October 2026 Calender

Worship and Music Life:

- **Sunday Worship:** Every Sunday at 10:00 AM
- **Sunday School:** Every Sunday at 10:20 AM
- **Choir Practice:** Every Thursday beginning Sept 10 at 7:00 PM
- **Martin Ringers:** Every Wednesday beginning Sept 9 at 6:00 PM
- **Carillons:** Every Thursday beginning Sept 10 at 9:30 AM

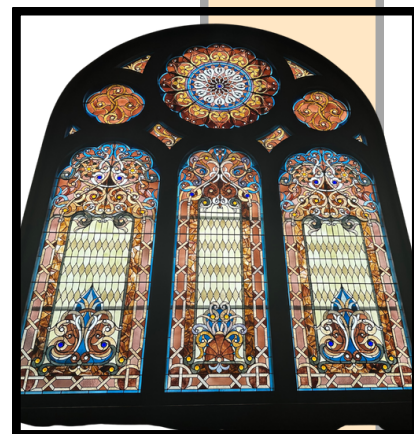
Outreach, Fellowship and Meals:

- **Serious Soup:** Every Monday at 11:30 AM
- **Hospitality Meeting:** Monday Sept 7 following Serious Soup
- **Men's Prayer Breakfast:** Every Tuesday at 7:00 AM
- **Jubilee Soup Kitchen:** Saturday, Sept 5 at 10:00 AM
- **Deacons and Fellowship Ministry Team:** Sunday, Sept 6 at 11:15 AM
- **ONA Meeting:** Sept 13 at 11:15 AM
- **Overnight Café Ministry Meeting:** Sept 8 at 4:30 PM, Sept 22 at 4:30 PM, and Trial Run on Oct 8 at 4:30 PM.
- **Overnight Café Experience Benefit:** Oct 15 at 5:30 PM
- **Church Pig Roast:** Saturday, Sept 12 at 3:00 PM

Church Business and Education:

- **Governing Council:** Thursday Sept 24 at 5:30 PM
- **Discernment Vision Mission Team:** Thursday Oct 15 at 5:30 PM
- **Trustees Meeting:** Wednesday, Sept 16 at 5:00 PM
- **FCE Meeting:** Sunday Sept. 20 at 11:15 AM
- **Adult Christian Ed:** Tuesday, Sept 8 at 3:00 PM
- **Coffee Class:** Every Sunday beginning Sept 13 at 8:30 AM

*Office hours are Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Office is Closed Friday to Sunday.



We are attempting to make things easier for everyone to see their interests, and give plenty of time for notice of future events by including part of the following month.

The times and dates are subject to change, but they are current at the time of publishing. Larger events will have more details given in the newsletter (Example: Overnight Cafe Fundraiser)

Pictures From The Church Picnic 2026



A Word From The Scholarship Team

Dear Congregation,

I recently had the pleasure of awarding Madeline Archer with this year's Weingartner Scholarship. Over the years, this program has helped many of our college students achieve their dream of further education.

We now have many children in lower grades who will be considering college in just a few years, and this will put a strain on the fund. You can help support them! Please consider making a donation to the Scholarship Fund, or perhaps including a memorial to it in your estate planning.

The Scholarship Team is always deeply appreciative of gifts from the congregation!

Thank you and God Bless,

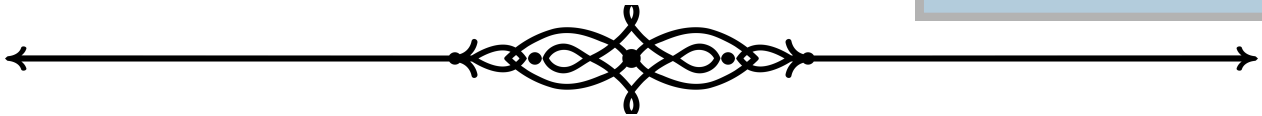
Greg Makulec

Karen Hill

Shirley Davidson

Jim Delmore

Your Name Could be Here!



SecondFirst Church

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https://stores.inksoft.com/second_first/shop/home

www.secondfirst.org