

## SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)  
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Organization US  
Postage PAID  
Permit No. 3734  
Rockford, Illinois

## SecondFirst Merchandise

Plan for your activities wardrobe now.

Order your shirts, hats and water bottles now so you have them for church events, fellowship and volunteering and we now have many options for you to choose from. You can get the church logo on the upper right chest, the church logo full front OR you can choose the church logo on the upper right chest and a custom Word Cloud on the back

(Make sure to choose a shirt with "Word Cloud" in the description).

You can pick them up from "Embroid This" on North Second or choose to have them picked up at Church. If you have any questions, please reach out to Jennifer Archer.

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March 2025



# The Tower

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)  
*Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's Grace*



## From The Pastor's Desk:

As I write this it is almost 50 degrees out. The thought of Spring and new beginnings are right around the corner.

If all goes well with the congregation vote on March 2, my last Sunday with you all will be March 9th. We will end worship with communion, our last one together. After March 9, I will be taking a few weeks off- a much needed break.

I hope you will welcome and care for Rev. Martha as you have for me. I am excited for Second-First as you venture into new territories. SecondFirst and all it's members will always be in my prayers.

God bless you all!

Becky Erbe

## SecondFirst Youth Service Project (February 2025)

Last month's youth service project was making hygiene, snack, and warm bags for our Overnight Cafe guests.

If you have an idea for a service project to better our community or know of an organization that could benefit from some youth volunteers, please share them with us!





## Musings From The Moderator

A family member had knee replacement surgery and was determined to set the record for ‘fastest recovery ever.’ At his one-month follow-up visit with his surgeon, he boasted that the previous day he had taken a 4-mile walk, that it hadn’t been completely easy, but he finished and was proud of it. The surgeon was quiet, then looked him in the eyes and said, “You know there is an important difference between ‘can’ and ‘should’.”

Paul dealt with this concept in two letters, Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, in the context of whether a follower of Christ could (i.e. ‘can’) in clear conscience eat food that had been part of a sacrifice to a pagan idol. Paul agrees that there is only one God and so the food is not ritually unclean. So, eating it, as might happen if you were in the company of non-Christian friends or family or colleagues, does not implicitly acknowledge the reality of the idol. BUT Paul cautions his young churches to take care that the exercising of their right to eat (the ‘can’) doesn’t become a stumbling block to others whose faith and conscience may be telling them differently.

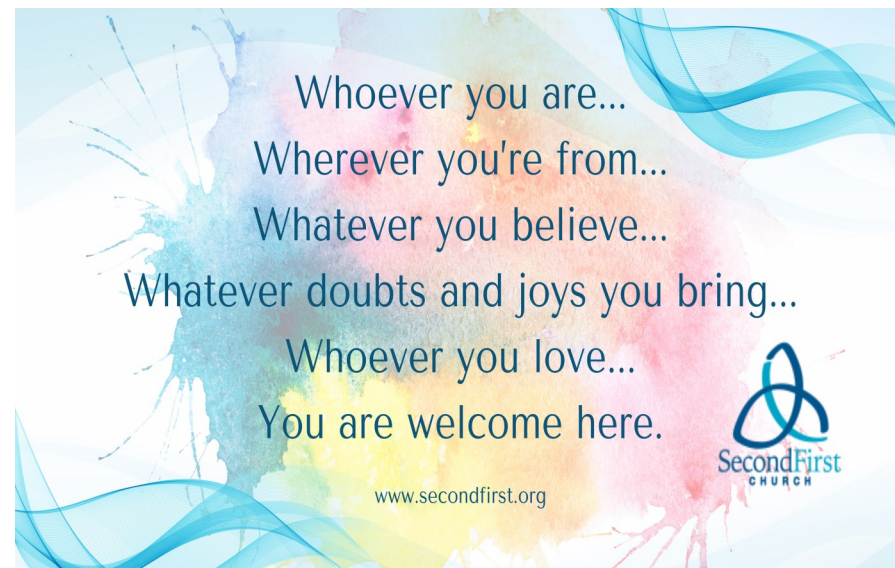
Paul says that he would voluntarily avoid such food in order to not be the cause of damaging the faith of another follower. Paul recognized the ‘can’ for himself, considers the “should” but opts for a “will not”. Paul practiced discernment, finding God’s way.

Our 21 st Century society loves the “I can...” but elevates it to “I will...” very easily, skipping past the question of “Should I?”. I can run a red light, I can post inflammatory words on Facebook, I can ignore the suffering of people in my community and the world---but should I? What message do I want to send, to myself and others?

It is not my place to decide for you what the things are that you should not do even though you could. These are areas for discernment for all of us, to be aware of how our words and actions have ripple effects, maybe unintended but real. As Paul concludes, “Knowledge puffs up, love builds up.”

May we always strive to walk humbly in love, not lording our knowledge over God’s children but building them up wherever they are.

Marge Maynard



## Family Christian Education Winter Outing (February 23, 2025)

It was a day of laughter, adventure, and community!

Tubing at Alpine Hills was the perfect way to spend quality time together in the great outdoors.

Thank you to Family Christian Education for sponsoring our annual winter outing.





## Mission Ministry Team News

Have you ever wondered where the Mission Ministry Team's budget of \$57,200 goes?

In 2024, \$34,121 of our \$57,200 went to our denominations (UCC & PCUSA) and Jeremiah Development. The balance was distributed to the following causes:

Carpenter's Place	\$500	UCC Outdoor Ministries	\$700
Christmas Fund UCC & PCUSA	\$500	Pig Roast	\$847
CROP Walk	\$2000	Rockford Urban Ministries	\$1000
Habitat for Humanity-groceries	\$201	Rock River Valley Pantry	\$1264
Haiti Education/Tools & Seeds	\$2500	Shelter Care Ministries	\$750
Haskell School - Boots	\$7503	Serious Soup	\$1000
Jubilee Soup Kitchen - groceries	\$1042	PCUSA Stronghold Camp	\$250
KFACT	\$2371	Haskell - Apples for Education	\$225

These organizations are very grateful for our support! We will be making some adjustments to who we support for 2025 in the near future! Our goal is to be good stewards of the Mission funds.

Thank you!!

From Karen Hill, Jay Baker, Holly Beeman, Liz Dickinson, Rosey Massenatt, Peg Joachim, David Noel, Zan Picchioni, Colleen McGee, and Kristin Duckmann.

### Jubilee Center Soup Kitchen

Our Saturdays to serve lunch to our neighbors in 2025 are:

March 1,  
April 5,  
July 26,  
September 6,  
and November 29.

Hope to see you at one or more of these opportunities to participate in hands-on ministry!



Photo of volunteers from November 30 2024

## What's Happening This Month? (Save the Date!)

### Tuesday Mornings at 7:00 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast

The 7 a.m. Tuesday breakfast continues to bring men together for scrambled eggs and prayer. If you're lucky, you might hear some new Dad Jokes! If you're a morning person feel free to join them.

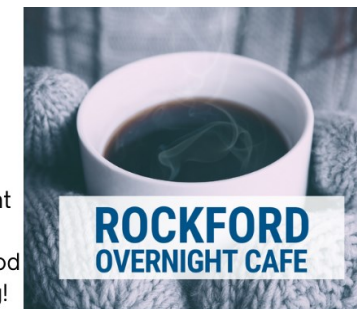
### Tuesdays in March at 9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

Every Tuesday at 9:00 AM the Thrift Shop will be open. The dates are March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th.

### March 5 Ash Wednesday!

### Overnight Cafe: Last night is March 9th

KUDOS to ALL who have and are pitching in to help with the Overnight Cafe!!! We have a GREAT team of people helping with check-in and food for meals and donations of clothing!



Our goal is providing a safe, warm space for the homeless in our area, and it is much appreciated by our guests and our community!

#### Any Assistance is *Still* Most Appreciated!!!

Even though the last night is approaching, we're grateful for any donations of food, funding, and time.

If you can provide a meal, or food towards a meal, please contact Karen Hill, 815-742-0873, [sakjhill@gmail.com](mailto:sakjhill@gmail.com). If you want to help with paying staff as our grant money is running out, donations can be made to the church, please label your check memo - Overnight Cafe. Thank You!

### Who Was St. Patrick?

St. Patrick was a 5th-century Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland. Born around 385 AD in Roman Britain, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders at 16 and spent six years as a slave in Ireland. After escaping, he became a priest and returned to Ireland to spread Christianity, converting many and establishing churches.

St. Patrick's Day, celebrated on March 17th (his believed death date), began as a religious feast but now honors Irish culture with parades, wearing green, and festivities. The day is associated with legends like Patrick using the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. He is considered the patron saint of Ireland, though not formally canonized by the Catholic Church.





# Pastor Search Committee Update

Dear SecondFirst Friends,

On behalf of the Senior Pastor Search Committee, the Trustees Ministry Team and the Governing Council, I am excited to present our candidate for Senior Pastor, Rev. Martha Langford.

I am calling a Congregational Meeting for Sunday, March 2, 2025, whose sole purpose is to vote on extending a Call to Ministry to Rev. Martha. All members present are eligible to vote via paper ballot, and in following our practice in both Ministry Team and Congregational Meetings, any who attend via Zoom will also have the opportunity to have their vote counted.

The second reason for this letter is to let you know events in which you can meet Rev. Martha ahead of the Sunday meeting. On Friday, February 28 the Governing Council and their significant others are invited to meet with Rev. Martha for supper in the Dining Room at 5:30 pm.

On Saturday, March 1 the congregation is invited to a Meet & Greet afternoon open house in the Dining Room from 2-4 pm. There will be beverages and sweet treats served, hosted by the Deacons/Fellowship Ministry Team.

On Sunday, March 2, following the vote, all will share in a light brunch in the Dining Room, hosted by the Hospitality Ministry Team.

At these events and in the coming weeks, please wear your name tags to help Rev. Martha get to know each of us! The Search Committee is looking forward to a positive outcome to this vote and is greatly anticipating working with her over the coming years.

Peace be with you!

Marge Maynard  
Moderator



## March Calendar

### Saturday, March 1

9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic  
10:00 AM- Jubilee Soup  
Kitchen

### Sunday, March 2

10:00 AM - Worship Service  
10:20 AM - Sunday School

### Monday, March 3

11:30 AM - Serious Soup  
12:30 PM - Hospitality

### Tuesday, March 4

7:00 AM - Men's Prayer  
Breakfast  
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

### Wednesday, March 5

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting  
6:00 PM- Martin Ringers  
6:30 PM - Ash Wednesday  
Worship

### Thursday, March 6

9:30 AM - Carillons  
7:00 PM - Choir

### Friday, March 7

Office is Closed

### Saturday, March 8

No Scheduled Activities

### Sunday, March 9

10:00 AM - Worship Service  
10:20 AM - Sunday School

### Monday, March 10

11:30 AM - Serious Soup  
5:30 PM - Deacons/Fellowship

### Tuesday, March 11

7:00 AM - Men's Prayer  
Breakfast  
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

### Wednesday, March 12

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting  
6:00 PM- Martin Ringers  
6:00 PM - ARC

### Thursday, March 13

9:30 AM - Carillons  
7:00 PM - Choir

### Friday, March 14

Office is Closed

### Saturday, March 15

9:00 AM - Bridge Clinic

### Sunday, March 16

10:00 AM - Worship Service  
10:20 AM - Sunday School

### Monday, March 17

11:30 AM- Serious Soup

### Tuesday, March 18

7:00 AM - Men's Prayer  
Breakfast  
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

### Wednesday, March 19

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting  
6:00 PM- Martin Ringers

### Thursday, March 20

9:30 AM - Carillons  
7:00 PM - Choir

### Friday, March 21

Office is Closed

### Saturday, March 22

No Scheduled Activities

### Sunday, March 23

10:00 AM - Worship Service  
10:20 AM - Sunday School

### Monday, March 24

11:30 AM - Serious Soup

### Tuesday, March 25

7:00 AM - Men's Prayer  
Breakfast  
9:00 AM - Thrift Shop

### Wednesday March 26

10:00 AM- Staff Meeting  
6:00 PM- Martin Ringers

### Thursday, March 27

9:30 AM - Carillons  
7:00 PM - Choir

### Friday, March 28

Office is closed

### Saturday, March 29

No Scheduled Activities

### Sunday, March 30

10:00AM - Worship Service  
10:20AM - Sunday School

### Monday, March 31

11:30 AM - Serious Soup

Please Note:

Changes to times and cancellations can happen with short notice due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Please check with the church office to confirm if meetings/activities are still happening according to the calendar!