



# FIRST FREE

CHRIST CENTERED + CHRIST SENT

AN EFCA CHURCH

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2021-2022**



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## CHURCH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2022

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Ephesians 4:3, NIV

The past year has been another opportunity for First Free Church to live out our mission statement, to help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together. We have continued to face challenges as we deal with the pandemic and all the ways that it has affected us, both personally and as a body of believers. Through it all, God has been faithful, and we have tried to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”. May we continue to be bound together in unity and peace as we seek God’s will together.

We have such a wonderful group of staff members! It is truly a blessing and an honor to serve alongside the many faithful servants on our church staff. A special thank you goes to Pastor Joel Sutton for his steady leadership of our church and staff, and his partnership with me and the rest of the Council. Thank you to the rest of our staff who have continued to adapt successfully to changing conditions during the pandemic. Thank you to our ministry staff members: Pastor Jay Pound, Pastor Paul Anleitner, Pastor Jason Pensa, Carrie Boyum, Maureen Juarez and Jeanine Bruen for your leadership in your areas of ministry. And thank you to our excellent support staff: Scott Beckett, Emma Burns, JoAnn Burns, Dan Fergus, Sarah Olson, Stacey Urbanz, and Jodi Wiken for all your diligent efforts to support our church’s many ministries.

Many thanks go to all our council members for giving their time and dedication to serve the church in this important spiritual leadership and oversight role. Thank you to Tim Audette, Vice Chair, and Pete McWilliams, Secretary, and the other council members: Jon Boyum, Hong Gu, Tim Lund, Darlene Swanson, John Symington, and Jason Taylor. Thanks to Jonathan Sannes for his short but impactful work in the Treasurer role, and thanks to Joel Burns for stepping in on short notice to take on the Treasurer role with enthusiasm and diligence. We will have some turnover this year on the Council as Pete McWilliams, Tim Lund, Darlene Swanson, and Jason Taylor step down, and Becki Kobiush and Lindsay Robinson join us. Thanks to each person for your willingness to serve.

Finally, a big thank you to the congregation for your support and prayer for me and the rest of the Council. It is greatly appreciated by all of us. Let’s all continue to work together to build God’s kingdom here in South Minneapolis.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Olson  
Council Chair

## SENIOR PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2022

*“My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!” Galatians 4:19*

Over my 20 years here at First Free, this year of 2021-22 has been unlike any other. It has been challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic and all of its variants dominated the national and local headlines. Schools, businesses, governments and churches (including ours) were all trying to decide how best to handle it. There was disagreement and conflict. As a result, some left our church. Others decided to just remain watching our services online. Others were excited to get back to worshipping together in person.

As we now move into the spring and summer months and the COVID-19 numbers have dramatically dropped off, more and more people are returning to worship together in-person. Once again people are finding their place of ministry. In the midst of the stress and difficulty of the past year, God has continued working as we have remained focused on our mission as a church—helping individuals become Christ-Centered and Christ-Sent together.

Last summer, through the generosity of the church, I was granted permission for a Sabbatical. It was a wonderful time of extended rest and spiritual renewal. Over the summer, as I took a break from preparing sermons each week and standing in our pulpit, I was able to attend and watch other church services. I have to say, I am very proud of what our staff has done as we transitioned and continued to grow with our online presence. Our online Sunday worship services are top rate.

As I came back in the Fall, we returned (slowly because of COVID-19) to two Sunday morning services and also to our Sunday morning classes and adult community groups. Many small groups continued to meet together—some virtually, others in-person. Our Velocity student ministry and Creekside children’s ministry also began meeting again in-person both on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday evenings. This past year our Faith Community Nurses were especially busy. They delivered gift bags to anyone who had COVID-19. They called and encouraged so many that were hurting, sick and lonely. God is still at work.

We have an outstanding staff team here at First Free! JoAnn Burns, Sarah Olson and Dan Fergus keep things together and moving in the office. Pastor Jay, Pastor Paul, Pastor Jason, Carrie Boyum, Stacey Urbanz, Maureen Juarez, Jeanine Bruen and Scott Beckett are each gifted and wonderful people to work with. Finally, I want to thank Jodi Wiken who is stepping down as our business administrator. She has been a real blessing. I also want to say “Thank You” to Jeff Olson, who is the Chairman of the Council. Jeff has given many hours of leadership to our church body during this challenging year. His wisdom and heart and friendship are invaluable.

My prayer, as First Free moves ahead, is that we might continue to see Jesus Christ being formed in each of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Sutton  
Senior Pastor

## ASSOCIATE PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2022

*“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV

One lesson from the past two years that I hope we can all hold onto is the reminder of what a joy and privilege it is to gather together as the family of God for worship, fellowship and ministry. I would not have said two years ago that this was something I took for granted; I have always been grateful for that opportunity and enjoyed the church family I have here at First Free. But I have been freshly reminded of the fact that there is something special and important about being gathered together. Gathering together reminds us that we have not just been saved, we have been saved into a family—adopted in Christ. Now that is a fact we can learn, a promise we can believe, but it is also a reality God has called us to live and experience.

That reminder for me, and for all of us as a staff, has motivated us this past year (and this coming summer), to focus on reconnecting with one another, on building community, and strengthening old relationships and building new ones. To facilitate that, we have provided opportunities to gather, to have fun together and to get connected. And we have also recognized the importance of extending that community to those who are unable to join us in-person, however we can. Central to the good news is the fact that God has graciously adopted us into his family, and when we live as a family, we become a living testimony to that truth. “Therefore, let us encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

### **Summer 2021 and Sabbatical**

This past summer Pastor Joel was on Sabbatical from May through August. As we planned for the summer last spring, we used it as an opportunity for me to grow in my preaching and sermon preparation. I enjoy preaching, but seldom have to do it several weeks in a row, which allows me under usual circumstances to keep preaching weeks free of other commitments. With Pastor Joel gone, I was both preaching more frequently, and handling additional responsibilities. I used that opportunity to get better at managing my time on preaching weeks and learning to be more comfortable (and to better trust God) when I was unable to stick to my usual preparation routine. As with many things, there is no real way to get better at this except to do it.

Additionally, with Pastor Joel’s help, Pastor Paul and I were also given the opportunity to map out the sermon series for the summer together (something Pastor Joel normally handles). We came up with the idea of preaching a series on what we considered, “Overlooked Books of the Bible.” This was a great experience for me, and again provided a perfect opportunity to learn and grow by doing. I also want to add how grateful I am for our current staff. I could not help but remember that during Pastor Joel’s last sabbatical, I was the only other person on staff who was comfortable preaching; this year both Jason and Paul were willing and able to preach (and I enjoyed hearing from them both!).

### **Back to a Full Ministry Schedule**

Like so many, I was excited for a return to a full ministry schedule as we headed into this past fall. As I mentioned above, our focus was on re-connecting and building community. On the adult ministries side, this meant resuming Sunday morning community groups, affinity groups (MOPS, Men United, WNBS, Soul Share, etc.) and starting up some new small groups. We were able to launch seven new small groups during the course of the fall, many of which continue to meet. While our community groups started with smaller numbers, we have seen those numbers grow over the course of the year. Finally, we also had 12 people sign up for Discovering First Free (our class for Membership)!

The past two years have been hard for everyone, though perhaps in different ways. But as is so often the case, times of challenge and loss remind us most powerfully of the things that matter most. The group of people that God has brought together (and continues to draw together!) here at First Free is both a wonderful blessing and a miracle. The blessing is that each of us gained a whole host of brothers and sisters, people who care for us and

love us, who smile when they see us and miss us when they don't. And this church family is a miracle in that we are a family because and only because of the redeeming work of Jesus; we are all here because of him.

As we look ahead to another year, my hope and prayer is that having been reminded of the precious gift that we have, in both our salvation and our new family, that we will all be newly motivated—and excited—to offer that gift to others. We have all been given a spectacular gift, and we have recently been reminded of its great value, let's not keep it to ourselves.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Pound  
Associate Pastor



## CREEKSIDE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2022

What a great year of ministry at Creekside! Here are a few highlights of 2021-2022.

### **Creekside Kids**

In the fall we launched into two Sunday services and two offerings for kids: Bible Time and Children's Church. Bible Time happens during the first hour and kids spend time with their leaders for the entirety of the hour. During the second hour, elementary kids remain with their families in the worship service and are dismissed prior to the sermon. This allows kids to have family worship time with the congregation. The second part of the service is spent in two elementary groups learning the morning's lesson. All children birth-fifth grade learn the same lessons on Sunday mornings through The Gospel Project curriculum. We began at the beginning of the Bible this fall and by the time we break for summer, we'll have learned from the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel. It has been fun to learn exciting Bible stories and to discover how the Bible is one big book—all pointing to the Gospel story.

### **Creekside Nursery & Preschool**

These groups meet during both hours on Sunday mornings and learn stories from the Bible. They also learn that they are loved by God, that church is a safe place, and that their leaders care for them. Stacey Urbanz has done a great job overseeing the nursery and the Nursery Coordinators keep things running smoothly while welcoming children to church and into the nursery classes.

### **Creekside Clubs**

We have had a great year of Creekside Clubs this year. We have many dedicated leaders who are committed to having relationships with the kids, investing in them, and pointing them to Jesus. There have been many fun activities including hikes to Minnehaha Creek, winter sledding, wacky hair night, movie night, a Seder dinner, and group-against-group tournaments in the gym. Clubs are for kids in grades 1-5 and wrap up at the end of April.

### **Creekside Special Events**

Many families participated in Creekside special events this year. We had two family hikes, ice fishing, boys fall camping at Camp Nathanael, Retreat46 at Camp Shamineau for 4-5 graders, and an end of the year Creekside Family Party. Vacation Bible Camp was our summer special event. It was a great week! The theme was Treasured: Discovering You Are Priceless to God. Kids left knowing that they were God's special treasure.

### **Creekside Mission Project**

We partnered with the Outreach Commission in March to rally the Creekside kids and families around a specific mission project. We took offerings on Sundays and Wednesdays during the month of March and raised almost \$200. We collected new toys and supplies for missionaries and ministries that First Free partners with in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Every week we focused on a different aspect of life or ministry in Congo. The generosity of our kids and families will make a huge impact on kids' lives in Kinshasa.

### **Camp Shamineau**

Last summer 55 kids and youth from First Free spent time as campers at Camp Shamineau and about 10 youth served in some kind of leadership capacity. We have had many adults and kids attend camp during the year for Mother Daughter weekend, Father Son weekend, Men's Retreat, Women's Retreat, Fall Fling (youth), & Retreat46 (4-5 graders). We continue to have a strong relationship with Camp Shamineau and we pray that kids' lives are changed and transformed because of their time away from home and their time spent at camp.

### **Creekside Leaders**

We would not be a ministry without the dedication and creativity of the Creekside Leaders. We have an incredible group of youth and adults who serve faithfully in the Nursery, Preschool, Bible Time, Children's Church, Clubs, at check-in, and as substitute leaders. There is a great 'behind the scenes' group of people who

support Creekside in areas of mailings, brainstorming, graphic design, photography, curriculum prep, organizing supplies, decorating, cleaning, and serving on a parent advisory team. Hats off to all who are called and are willing to serve the kids in our church body.

Children are not just the future of our church—they are the church! Our kids have the potential to make a huge impact in our community and in this world for Christ. I am proud to work with the Creekside leaders and Church leadership who have the vision of empowering our kids with the knowledge of Christ and the Bible and helping them grow in their living relationships with Jesus Christ. I love working with our First Free kids and I am blessed to see them grow in their faith and to Know God and Show God to those around them.

I look forward to another year of ministry in Creekside at First Free.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie Boyum  
Children's Ministry Director

## VELOCITY STUDENT MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2022

### Introduction

It is with a grateful heart that I would like to thank our volunteer leaders and parents for sticking with us through thick and thin over the past two years. Your graciousness towards our leadership as we've navigated tricky waters leaves me feeling grateful. This year youth group has finally begun to feel a little more like it should. It feels like we have come out of "survival" mode and have moved into more of a "rebuilding" mode.

### Velocity Youth Group

It's been amazing to be back in the building every week and to be doing ministry in-person and sharing the building with the Creekside Children's Ministry on Wednesday nights. The high school has been looking at what the Bible says about our sexuality and how as Christians we should think through various subjects that are related to sexuality. The middle schoolers, led by Doug Nelson, have been exploring what it means to believe in God and exploring how we can know that Christianity is the right way to know God.

### Sunday Community Group

Over the past year, we've been using the Gospel Foundations to take an overview of the Bible, to get the 10,000-foot view of what has happened throughout the Old Testament. It has been great to revisit the themes of faith with Abraham, the loving pursuit of God as illustrated through the life of Hosea and even the mistakes of David.

### Takeout on Chicago

Thanks to the generous support from our church family, we raised almost \$15,000 and served almost 200 pizzas at Takeout on Chicago and got to try something new that we had never done before!

### Summer 2022

This summer we are offering our high school students an Adventure Trip at Rock Ridge or the option to go to Lead the Cause in Denver, Colorado. Our middle school students have the opportunity to go on a mission's trip to Duluth. It is exciting to see the opportunities that God has provided for our students this summer. I am so grateful to have such faithful and committed volunteer leaders to be able to lead these trips while I am away on sabbatical.

### In Conclusion

This past year we've had the opportunity to rebuild the Student Ministry and get back to firing on all cylinders for which I am very thankful. I pray that the following will be true of not only our student ministries but of our church congregation as well, as the apostle Peter says, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen." (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Pensa  
Student Pastor

## WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Before writing up this report, I looked back on the annual report for last year and somewhere in that opening line I said “2020 was the oddest year for the life of worship in the church that I have ever seen.” Thankfully, we did not get a complete repeat of 2020, but this past year still did present its fair share of challenges to our church community’s ability to gather together in worship as waves of the pandemic lingered on.

These challenges presented us with an opportunity to continually improve our livestream technologies and techniques. This allowed significant portions of our congregation, who could not be with us in-person at various points in the pandemic, to still feel a sense of connection to the life of worship of our church. I’m very happy with the progress we’ve made in the broadcasts of our worship services, and I’m happy that we will still be able to livestream even as more and more people return to worshipping face-to-face in our sanctuary.

One of our biggest goals for this past ministry year was the development of next gen leaders in worship arts. Emma Burns became a worship intern in the fall of 2021 and has done an excellent job leading us in worship regularly. But it’s not just Emma, with Ellie Nordell (formerly Fergus) graduated from college and back leading songs on occasion, along with young leaders from student ministry like Isaac Foss, Asher Koch, and Lucy Kobielush taking on increased ownership in the music ministry, we are empowering next gen leaders to grow into the full potential of what God has placed inside of them and creating pipelines for leadership that we hope will ensure a continuous, healthy cycle of leaders in our ministry.

Even when cycles of in-person attendance were in flux due to the changing nature of the pandemic, our Worship Arts ministry had consistent servant leaders on the platform and in the tech booth serving our community week in and week out. When a rehearsal was canceled at the last minute due to a close contact, musicians and singers adapted and practiced with our “rehearsal mixes” at home. Tech team leaders would fill in for others at the last minute who got sick. It is their flexibility and commitment to serve God and the community which has kept our ministry healthy and thriving.

Finally, I’m thankful that in each of our art galleries during Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter, that we continue to get people of all ages and skill levels contributing what they have to our life of worship in this way. Music is just one of many artistic expressions of worship, and we want to continue to celebrate other expressions such as the visual arts. One of the new special celebrations of worship via the visual arts we had in this past ministry year was the special art exhibit entitled “Image Bearers” featuring the work of our own Gayle Gilman. I hope that Gayle’s work and the contribution of all of our church artists invites all of us into deeper wonder and worship, and that it may inspire each of us to find the unique ways that God has called us to worship him with our creativity.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Anleitner  
Worship Pastor

## FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES ANNUAL REPORT 2022

*“There are many parts but one body. So, it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12*

The Faith Community Nurses continue to support, encourage and assist families and individuals spiritually, emotionally and tangibly. This past year we experienced the love of so many who stepped up to assist in this ministry. Cindy Larson began work as a volunteer FCN, along with many other volunteers, who served in a variety of areas.

Help was offered in a myriad of ways, with parishioners using their gifts and talents to help others. Kids sent cards to the elderly. Women made dozens of prayer shawls to distribute to people who were ill. People supplied meals, made masks, provided childcare, helped organize and clean up houses and yards.

Phone visitation took place with the help of those in the congregation. Volunteers helped provide transportation to medical appointments and to church. With COVID–19 restrictions being lifted; volunteers went into hospitals and homes to visit those who were unable to get out.

Zoom continued to be an effective means for maintaining programs and communication in the church. Women’s Bible study meetings on Zoom and on phone were managed by the FCNS. These meetings continued throughout the summer of 2021 and into the school year. Seven women who did not have accessibility to meet online or in-person were able to participate in Bible studies over the phone. MOPS and MOMSnext met in person twice monthly throughout the year, with FCN involvement. Two classes of online CPR were offered with social distancing or via Zoom for the skills checkoffs.

The FCNS provided input to church leadership in making decisions about COVID–19 protocols and related issues. We are thankful that there have been no COVID–19 outbreaks related to church activities. We provided evidenced–based information on COVID–19 to people in the congregation who requested it. FCNs served on the Caring Commission and helped distribute prayer shawls and COVID–19 bags to families with COVID–19.

Other supports FCNs offered the church were: a flu clinic, a program called Surviving the Holidays from GriefShare for people who had lost a loved one, and organizing a monthly Singspiration at Minnehaha Senior Living, at the request of First Free Members who live there.

The Wellness Advisory Team met during the past year and provided support to the FCNs. We are so thankful for those who participated: Doug Erickson, Dee Huanca, Katie Klenk, John Lande, Gail Marchand, Phyllis Nordin, and Darlene Swanson.

Home Goings since the last report: Dee Becket, Verna Beckman, Marilyn Fisher, Mordechai Herschtein, John Kowalski, Chad Wentzel and Dean Larson.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Bruen and Maureen Juarez, Staff FCNs  
Dee Huanca and Cindy Larson, Volunteer FCNs

## CARING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2022

It has been a privilege to serve as the Caring Commission Chair this past year and watch as God provides for this congregation.

This year the Caring Commission consisted of eight members: Kim Foss, Allie Danielson, Apryl Hultstrand, Jeanine Bruen, Maureen Juarez, Darlene Swanson, John Symington and myself. Together we work to offer care and support to the congregation of First Free.

The Benevolent Fund, which was well supplied at the beginning of 2021, continues to be our primary area of service. The increase in balance made it possible to distribute a greater amount of funds this year. Funds were primarily, but not exclusively, distributed to those within our congregation to meet a variety of needs including rent, groceries, medical bills, and other practical items. In December, the Caring Commission distributed approximately \$7,500 in Christmas gifts to families within our congregation who may have been in need of an extra blessing.

In November, the Caring Commission coordinated the annual CES Food and Hygiene Drive collecting approximately 70 bags of donations.

The Faith Community Nurses, Maureen Juarez and Jeanine Bruen, continue to be an important part of our team by identifying individuals who may need support in a variety of ways.

Courtney Hunter has assumed responsibility over the kitchen, and we are thankful for her dedication and hard work in that area.

It has been a blessing to watch you all give in order to support your brothers and sisters in Christ. May we bring glory and honor to God through our giving and may He bless you all, the cheerful givers of First Free.

Respectfully submitted,

Eve McClun  
Caring Commission Chair

## OUTREACH COMMISSION 2022

The Outreach Commission has been charged to “Raise the temperature of Missions” at First Free Church.

Our Fall Outreach Weekend took place November 6th and 7th. On Saturday morning, we were blessed to hear about the short-term mission trips that took place in 2021 from young adults in our church. Asher Koch, a high school student, shared about his trip to Zambia with Teen Missions. Emily Holliday presented on her trip to Montana with nursing students from Crown College. Jessica Holliday shared about her training in Hawaii and subsequent trip to Paraguay with the organization, Youth With a Mission (YWAM). We were able to stream and record the event for those who couldn't attend in-person. On Sunday morning, Phil and Cindy Read, Enrique and Becky Fernandez, and Tim and Carolyn Dahlin shared during the Sunday school hours. Anastasia Gerhardt spoke on Sunday morning to the youth about her spiritual journey and her plans to become a missionary in London. Josh Krato, a missionary to Czech Republic, preached both services on his call to mission work.

Our Winter Outreach Weekend took place on February 26th and 27th. On Saturday morning, the church heard from New Life Family Services and Arrive Ministries, two local ministries supported by First Free. They shared powerful testimonies and stories on the life-changing work God is doing through them for refugees and pregnancies. On Sunday, Community Emergency Services shared during both hours of Sunday school about their impact as a Christian faith-based food shelf. Both days generated excitement about the great work being done through these local ministries, even prompting some to sign-up to pray for or be volunteers with these ministries. Just like the fall weekend, we streamed and recorded the event as a future resource. On Sunday morning, Jordan Nissa Borer Nelson preached about faith as small as a mustard seed. Pastor Jordan was one of the recipients of the One Fund. It was a joy to hear him preach.

In June 2021, we were able to hear from Pastor Nubako Selenga on a Saturday morning and enjoyed coffee and donuts. Later in March of 2022, Creekside Friends was able to learn about the ministry in the Democratic Republic of Congo and did a supply toy drive for items they can use in their ministry as well as funds to purchase items for the ministry locally. A special thanks to Carrie Boyum for the vision to partner with Outreach and involve the children in mission work.

Another way the Outreach Commission is making our missionaries known is through the Missionary Spotlight found in the church newsletter. Our hope is that the church will learn about our missionaries and be prompted to pray for them. Additionally, prayer requests from missionaries can be found in the church's prayer guide.

Thank you to those who took the time to pray for our missionaries as well as those who have volunteered their time to make these events run smoothly.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryant Dittmer  
Outreach Commission Chair

## FINANCE & PROPERTY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Our Lord has been very busy this last year helping us make many much-needed improvements and changes to our building and our properties across the street. I am continued to be blessed with an exceptional group of talented and dedicated problem solvers; Pete Lehner, Jeremy Kobielush, Frank Cupersmith, Tim Lund, Pete McWilliams, Jonathan Sannes, Joel Burns, and Ted Koch (who has been graciously sitting in on the meetings until he officially starts his term in June).

In August we had contacted the city's 311 Department with request for the installation of a LED enhanced pedestrian crosswalk at the north corners of 52nd and Chicago for the purpose of safety as there was a bus stop on opposite corners and a restaurant on the other. They had replied it would be addressed on November 23. Not hearing from them we contacted again and were told the case was still open and was directed to another party.

Last summer, Tim Lund worked with an interior design person and Jason to complete the graphics for the Velocity logos and painting in the youth room. He also completed the Creekside graphics & painting across from the church office. We are forever thankful for his painting expertise.

Large entry door identification numbers were requested by the church nurses so emergency personnel (fire and rescue) would know what doors to enter in cases of emergency entry. We chose doors to number; the north door being 1 (the door with the handicap access and elevator) the middle door, or main entrance, is #2, and the south door is #3.

At the beginning of December, a new family moved into 5151 Chicago Ave, the middle house across the street. In November, as preparation for their occupancy, Jason Olson installed a new roof and gutters. David McCoy's Arrive team set them up with furnishings, a new refrigerator was purchased, John Symington installed a new bathroom sink, and a new dryer vent was installed outside. The interior underwent a thorough cleaning and general painting. GFI outlets were added in the kitchen and bathrooms. Throughout the house, smoke detectors and carpets were replaced.

In December there was a major water main break reported at 5155 Chicago Ave, our southern house across the street. Considering the weather and the pandemic, this could not have come at a worse time. The lag-time to get the low bid contractor to do the repair was considerable due to the company's backlog, an effect partially due to the effect of the pandemic on their workforce. To supply water to 5155 Chicago Ave, we had to make an outside connection to 5151, the house next door's outside tap water. The cold that month was a factor that kept Doug Nelson and Scott Beckett, very busy to keep the connection unfrozen. One day they ended up giving many hours throughout the afternoon and evening to get the water flowing. They have our heartfelt appreciation for going above and beyond. It was not until January that the break finally was able to be repaired.

It has been determined all three of our houses need new heating and air conditioning units, mostly due to age as we've had some breakdowns. On New Year's Eve heat was lost due to a fault in the furnace, a fault in a transformer. It was repaired and heat was restored, but the furnace was declared old as well as the AC is shot. Last summer Pete had to install three window AC units in 5147 Chicago Ave. We are presently shopping for estimates for central HVAC on all three houses as they are of the same ages.

This coming summer we are looking to get a new rooftop AC unit for the nursery and split AC units for the two south-end offices. In the backyard of the center house across the street the large ash tree is suspected of having ash borer disease. We are going to contract to have it treated, if needed. Besides the cost to have cut down being prohibitive, it would be a shame to lose a fine tree.

Over the course of several months, we have been investigating companies to assess the repairs needed to resolve the problem masonry on our south main building. We have received three bids ranging \$67,000 to \$158,000 showing big disparities in their conclusions in both price and scope of work. All are excellent



companies with excellent recommendations. After many reviews and discussions, we determined the lowest bid, Building Restoration Corporation, a Roseville company, met our expectations and would fulfill the requirements for our church's masonry at this time. We are planning for it to happen in the spring. The repairs are mainly on the east and south side of the building. The project has been promised not to take any more than two weeks.

I pray along with the rest of the board that our work is in agreement with God's blueprints in the continued improvements and maintenance of First Free properties.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles Sawyer  
Finance & Property Board Chair

## TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Lord provides. We at First Free can give thanks for another healthy financial fiscal year. Despite the on-going challenges the world keeps throwing at us, we continue to be able to fund our ministries in our part of South Minneapolis. We began the fiscal year cautiously, with a nearly flat increase to the previous year budget while expecting more in-person activities to resume. Given the uncertainty of how we all “came back” to our worship in new and our usual ways, the caution was warranted, and it reflected in our finances.

As of March 31, 2022, our weekly average income is \$20,607 which is (\$431) below our budgeted \$21,038 weekly average income. The good news, it is an improvement year-on-year at this time when we were (\$1,115) below our budgeted weekly average. Giving seasonality trends have been less predictable, but if we can close out the remaining months based on the three-year averages, we will be able to finish the year out as planned. Operating expenses are under budget largely due to unspent Outreach, Adult, Youth and Children’s related activities that did not occur.

The balance sheet is healthy. We are grateful to have reserves for ministry funding and to address any challenges that come our way. As of March 31, 2022, our cash and liquid assets stand at \$586,000, with unrestricted funds of \$407,000 (includes \$272,000 of Operating Reserves.) We have no debt as we paid off the church van recently.

I want to acknowledge the work of our previous Treasurer Jonathan Sannes. We will continue to work on the enhancement list he and our advisor previously developed. Also, a thank you to Jodi Wiken for her services as Business Administrator. We wish her the best going forward. Our council voted to engage Dennison CPA services to manage our book-keeping. We are excited to work with them as they have a true stewardship mindset and are incredibly skilled at accounting. During this migration, we will be simplifying our chart of accounts and enhance many of our current processes and procedures.

I ask for your prayers as we close out the year and begin a new fiscal year soon:

- That we follow His leading as we fund our ministries at First Free
- Fruitfulness in our transition to Dennison for our bookkeeping
- Communication and unity as we encounter change and challenges during this time

I am very grateful to serve as First Free’s Treasurer and thankful for the needed help since I started in March. Special thanks to Jeff Olson, Tim Audette, Pastor Joel, Julie Danielson, Jodi Wiken and Dave Leininger over the past two months.

For 2022-2023, our proposed budget is \$1,100,435 which is a 6% increase from our current fiscal year budget. This is a step of faith, but well-supported by our giving trends and with a backstop of our strong cash reserves. The primary drivers for the increase are a significant minimum 5% salary increase for our hard working and talented staff, the addition of two part-time ministry positions in the Worship and Middle School Student Ministries, and a 2.5% increase in our Outreach budget. We humbly ask the congregation to approve this budget and step out in faith with us as we continue to seek to live out our church’s mission in South Minneapolis.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Burns  
Treasurer

**FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**  
**PROPOSED BUDGET 2022–2023**

**July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023  
as of May 1, 2022**

**First Evangelical Free Church**

**2022-2023 Budget Proposal**

May 1st, 2022

	2022-23 Proposed Budget*	2021-22 Forecast**	2021-22 Budget	Proposed Budget Higher (Lower) vs.			
				21-22 Forecast		21-22 Budget	
				\$	%	\$	%
<b>Income</b>							
General	927,385	919,861	869,751	7,524	0.8%	57,634	6.6%
Mission / Outreach	173,050	125,041	168,850	48,009	38.4%	4,200	2.5%
	<b>1,100,435</b>	<b>1,044,902</b>	<b>1,038,601</b>	<b>55,533</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>61,834</b>	<b>6.0%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>							
Personnel & Admin	692,432	618,946	622,951	73,486	11.9%	69,481	11.2%
Commissions	95,475	70,255	98,650	25,220	35.9%	(3,175)	-3.2%
Finance & Property	139,478	154,093	148,150	(14,615)	-9.5%	(8,672)	-5.9%
Outreach Commission	173,050	144,835	168,850	28,215	19.5%	4,200	2.5%
	<b>1,100,435</b>	<b>988,129</b>	<b>1,038,601</b>	<b>112,306</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>61,834</b>	<b>6.0%</b>

\* Fiscal Year 2022-23 Proposed Budget, Council Approved on May 1st, 2022

\*\* Forecast as if 3/31/2022