



# FIRST FREE

CHRIST CENTERED + CHRIST SENT

AN EFCA CHURCH

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2023-2024**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ANNUAL REPORT</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Church Council	1
Senior Pastor	2
Associate Pastor	3-4
Creekside Children's Ministry	5-6
Velocity Student Ministry	7
Worship Ministry	8
Faith Community Nurses	9
Caring Commission	10
Outreach Commission	11
Property Commission	12
Housing Committee	13
Treasurer's Report	14-15
Proposed Budget	16



## CHURCH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ~ Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV*

Greetings, church family. It is an honor to serve as the Council Chair. Thank you for your prayers and support for me and for the entire council.

This past year has been one filled with some major changes. Pastor Joel Sutton announced that he would be retiring at the end of 2024, a Senior Pastor Call Committee was formed, and the congregation called Pastor Jay Pound as our next Senior Pastor. If that weren't enough, Pastor Jason Pensa moved into a part-time role as he returned to school to work on a Master's in Counseling degree at Bethel University. He recently announced his resignation effective July 31. We are so grateful for Pastor Jason's nine years of service as our Student Pastor. As part of this transition, we have a second Call Committee currently working to find a new Student Pastor.

Earlier in 2023 we passed some significant bylaws changes that were effective in June 2023 which streamlined and simplified our church governance structure. We eliminated the Nurture & Worship Commissions, the Finance & Property Board, and the Audit Committee, and created both a new Property Commission and a new Finance Committee to come alongside and support the Church Treasurer in that challenging role.

We had fewer staff changes this year than last. Besides the previously mentioned pastoral changes, we said goodbye to our Graphic Designer, Sarah Olson, who served in the role for five years, and welcomed Ellie Nordell as our new Graphic Designer. Thank you to each of our wonderful staff members who all faithfully serve our church body and community.

I'd also like to thank the great team of council members who serve with me. Thank you to Tim Audette - Vice Chair, Joel Burns - Treasurer, Jon Boyum - Secretary, and the other council members: Becki Kobielush, Lindsay Robinson, and John Symington who have continued to serve. It was also great to welcome David McCoy last year as a new council member. And finally, I'm also excited for three new council members who will be joining us in June: Lenka Bragg, Casey Foss, and DJ O'Neill.

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with hope and enthusiasm as we look forward to how God will continue to work through our church at 52nd & Chicago. I hope you are as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Olson  
Council Chair

## SENIOR PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2024

*"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. . . . I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I press on . . . " ~ Phil 3:12-14*

This is my final annual report. This past September of 2023, I announced my upcoming retirement. My first Sunday at First Free as the Senior Pastor was on Easter Sunday of 2002. My final sermon as Senior Pastor will be on Sunday, December 29, 2024.

After my resignation was announced, the church voted on a Senior Pastor call committee, and they quickly got to work. In January of 2024, Jay Pound was presented and voted on by the church body to be the next Senior Pastor at First Free. I am so thankful for the great work of the call committee. Since January, Pastor Jay and I have been preparing on the transition. Pastor Jay has begun attending the Church Council meetings, budget meetings, and is part of the Student Pastor search committee.

In January 2023, we returned to a single worship service so that we could worship together as one church family. The excitement, energy and enthusiasm in our worship was felt immediately. Our attendance has remained constant averaging 319 on Sunday mornings. When we include our online viewers, we are averaging 493 worshippers.

I am excited for our church family as we move together into the future. Over the past several months different people have shared with me stories of how God is transforming their lives; a community caring for and loving them during a particularly difficult season, another involved a decision of a deeper commitment—to Christ and the church. This past Easter we baptized eleven individuals. This past weekend, a couple of children prayed to receive Christ at Camp Shamineau. God is moving!

I do believe that First Free is set up to be used by God as a penetrating lampost in South Minneapolis, shining Christ's light and providing a beacon of hope to those hurting in the community. God continues to call us as individuals and as a community to be Christ-centered, Christ-sent people, reaching out and inviting others into that same life transforming relationship with Christ.

I am so thankful to God for the many partners in ministry I have had the privilege of working alongside. The office staff keep us all on task. Thank you to JoAnn Burns, Sarah Olson, Ellie Nordell, and Dan Fergus. Thank you, Scott Beckett, for your tireless work behind the scenes keeping things working. Thank you, ministry staff, for your excellent teamwork and deep commitment to serve and shepherd God's people: Pastor Jay, Pastor Paul, Pastor Jason, Carrie Boyum, Jeanine Bruen, Allison Danielson, Stacey Urbanz, Doug Nelson and Emma Delisi.

Finally, I want to say a huge "Thank You" to Jeff Olson, who is the Chairman of the Council, and to the whole council. They have provided much wisdom and grace and have given many hours of leadership to our church body.

Might all of us together, in this next year, press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Sutton  
Senior Pastor

## ASSOCIATE PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2024

*"Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel...The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." ~ Deut. 31:7-8, NIV*

### Big Transitions

This past year and the one that lies ahead are both years of significant transition and change for me, as well as the church. Pastor Joel has not only been my boss and mentor in ministry for twelve years, he has been *my pastor* for 20. Many times throughout the candidating process, and even long before, I struggled to imagine the change that is now actually underway; I struggled to imagine ministry here without him at the helm. And while I am excited for what lies ahead, excited for this new call on my life, I cannot help but to feel a little nervous and intimidated. Thankfully, here as so often, scripture offers some powerful insights, despite the very different situation.

In Deuteronomy 31, Moses appoints Joshua to succeed him as the leader of all Israel. I can only imagine how intimidating that must have been, both the role itself, and the fact that he had to follow Moses. Even scripture testifies that there was only one like Moses (Dt. 34:10-12). I am confident that Joshua was excited and nervous and intimidated; he would have been a fool if he wasn't. Moses surely knows this too. So when Moses calls Joshua before all the people to present him as their new leader, notice what he says to Joshua: *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you...do not be afraid; do not be discouraged"* (Dt. 31:8, emphasis mine). Moses knows Joshua must feel intimidated, knows he is starting to feel the great responsibility, knows he feels inadequate, and so he looks at this upcoming leader and says, in effect, don't worry, it's not about you anyway - God will be with you!

As I look ahead, facing what I must admit is a much less intimidating transition, I am working to let the wisdom of Moses reshape my mind and life. First Free belongs to Jesus, this is his church and we are his people. I believe that the same God that brought Israel to the promised land planted this church right here at 52nd & Chicago. And I believe what Moses said. Whatever lies ahead in this next chapter for our church, in this next chapter for my life, the Lord himself goes before us and will be with us; he will never leave us nor forsake us. If we believe that, then we should be excited - and not afraid.

### Marriage Elective & Retreat

One of the big highlights for me from this past year was our marriage elective and the group that went on the marriage retreat. Heading into this past ministry year, our whole staff felt a need to minister to marriages. Initially, we were trying to decide between an elective and a special event or retreat weekend, and we ended up being able to offer both. We decided to start with an elective, but we wanted to find a way to offer it to as many people as possible. Pastor Paul suggested we could offer it twice, so that if anyone missed a week, they would still have another opportunity. This presented some challenges, but ended up as a great success. We had strong participation over all four sessions (over 120 for the first two weeks, and over 60 for the second offering). We are grateful to Torrey and Sue Robinson who did a great job leading all four weeks.

After we scheduled the elective, Carrie Boyum noticed that Weekend to Remember would be hosting a marriage retreat near the Mall of America shortly after the elective was over. We decided to advertise that as an opportunity for further learning and time together for couples in the church. In the end, ten couples from church attended the retreat, including Heidi and me. The weekend provided a great opportunity for all of us to invest in our marriages and to connect with each other. The response to both events reinforced the need for the church to keep investing in marriages and families; we hope to build

on those experiences in the future.

### **New Members and New Life**

Finally, I wanted to highlight two things from this spring. After a large group asked to be baptized on Easter in 2023, we decided to make this part of our church's annual rhythm. And just like last year, we baptized a large group across two services, including children, youth and an adult. Baptism is a significant step of faith, and I loved being able to celebrate again the clear evidence of God's work in our midst. Second, in our fall and spring sessions combined, we had 24 people attend and complete Discovering First Free, our class for church membership. While not all have become members, most have - or will at the annual meeting. Here too, I am encouraged both by the clear evidence of God's presence and work, and by the desire of so many to commit to this church and its vision.

I hope that you will celebrate all of these things with me, and pray for God's continued direction and work in and through our church for this next year, and the years to come. No doubt we will encounter new challenges and new opportunities, but let us be bold and courageous, for the Lord himself goes before us, and he will be with us.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Pound  
Associate Pastor



## CREEKSIDE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The mission of Creekside is to help kids KNOW GOD, GROW IN GOD, and SHOW God's love to others. We want all of our kids at First Free to KNOW Jesus Christ through a saving and personal relationship. We desire that all of our kids GROW in their faith in Jesus Christ by learning from the Bible, praying, and growing a Christian community with intentional leaders. We want our kids to SHOW God's love to all of those around them by serving, praying for, and telling others about the love God has for them. All programs and activities at Creekside point to one of these three areas of the mission.

### **Creekside Nursery & Preschool**

These groups meet during both Community Hour and Worship Hour on Sunday mornings and learn stories from the Bible through a curriculum called Sing & Play. The kids learn that they are loved by God, that church is a safe place, and that their leaders care for them. Stacey Urbanz, the Children's Ministry Associate oversees the nursery and preschool, along with all of the leaders. Stacey keeps things running smoothly while welcoming children to church and into the nursery and preschool classes.

### **Creekside on Sundays**

Bible Time for elementary kids (kindergarten - 5th grade) happens during Community Hour and kids spend time with their leaders learning from the Bible. During Worship Hour, elementary kids remain with their families in the worship service and are dismissed to Children's Church 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 elementary kids learn the same lessons on Sunday mornings through The Gospel Project curriculum. This year we have been learning from the beginning of the New Testament. On Sundays, we average 67 kids (birth - 5th grade). However, we have had 103 kids participate in classes this school year. We have a group of 50+ adults who are leaders on Sundays and 25+ youth who volunteer with kids on a regular basis. Praise God for His faithful servants who have hearts for children!

### **Creekside Clubs**

We have had a great year of Clubs! We had 67 kids in first-fifth grade regularly involved in Clubs. We have 25 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 games in the Gym with David Hauge, hikes to Minnehaha Creek, wacky hair night, a Seder dinner, game night, movie night, and Shamineau night. All of our Club groups helped with service projects this year including making sandwiches for The Sandwich Project, MN, decorating lunch bags for Meals on Wheels, and making cards for First Free seniors. All of our groups are using the DigIn curriculum. The 1-3 graders are focusing on the Foundations of Faith and the 4-5 graders are focusing on The Heart of God. Wednesday nights are a time of fun, play, relationships, and discipleship for first-fifth graders.

### **Creekside Special Events**

Many families participated in Creekside special events this year. We had two family hikes, the Advent Festival, Retreat46 at Camp Shamineau for 4-5 graders, and an end of the year Creekside Family Party. We had an amazing week of Vacation Bible Camp in June last summer! We had 106 campers join us for the week and we had the help of over 103 volunteers make VBC possible. The theme was *Stellar: Shining Jesus' Light*.

## **Camp Shamineau**

Last summer 51 kids and youth from First Free spent time as campers at Camp Shamineau. First Free was generous to give each of these campers a \$100 scholarship toward their week at camp. We had many adults and kids attend camp during the year for Father-Son weekend, Mother-Son weekend, Mother-Daughter weekend, Fall Fling (youth), and Retreat46 (4th - 5th 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 adults and youth who serve faithfully in the Nursery, Preschool, Bible Time, Children's Church, Clubs, at check-in, as substitute leaders, as greeters, and security. 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, and cleaning. Hats off to all who are called and are willing to serve the kids in our church body.

One of my favorite traditions at First Free is to present our Kindergarteners with their own Bibles. This year we gifted each elementary Creekside kid with a Bible bag, encouraging them to bring their Bibles to church on Sundays and Wednesdays. We have been very intentional to open Bibles in all classes this year and it's been really fun to see kids become more and more familiar with the Bible and become comfortable reading God's Word. During Children's Church this year we regularly play and sing a song, "The Books of the Bible." Many kids have recited all 66 books of the Bible and have earned a Creekside bookmark.

I am proud to work with the Creekside leaders and church leadership who have the vision of empowering our kids to know God 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; to KNOW God, to GROW in God, and to SHOW God's love 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 2024**

## **Introduction**

This is my last annual report. When I look back over the past nine years that I have been here we've journeyed through some significant milestones together. There have been joys and challenges; bringing the sixth graders in, splitting the middle and high school programming, navigating online youth groups have been some of the roads we've walked together.

## **Velocity Youth Group**

One of the biggest highlights of the year has been to invest in our leaders, giving them more opportunities and responsibilities to exercise their leadership. We had two different students take the Wednesday night lesson and one adult small group leader led two different lessons. Doug and an awesome crew of leaders led our group up at District Blitz this year.

## **Sunday Community Group**

This year Doug and Tamar have been going full-steam ahead with their middle school Sunday hour. I am so proud of how they are helping students to really dive into the word. What they're doing is essentially hermeneutics (Bible study methods) in practice. This year Tom Ives joined me in the high school Sunday hour. It has been one of my favorite parts of this past year. We have spent the entire school year looking at Jesus' life and ministry chronologically. The Jewish context, the map of Israel and insights from the context of the passage has given greater depth to our study.

## **Terrace on Chicago**

Thanks to the generous support of our church family, we raised over \$20,000 and served almost 200 people at Terrace on Chicago! I have come to appreciate all the positive elements this fundraiser brings to our church body and community. We get the privilege of offering the opportunity for church members to bring friends and family to the church who might not otherwise come. They also get the opportunity to interact with students in our church.

## **Student Ministry Team**

This year we've looked at tools that help students as disciple-makers for Jesus. We taught them leadership skills to lead their friends towards Jesus and how to pray themselves and lead others in prayer. We've come back to talking about why we share testimonies and how to do so.

## **In Conclusion**

It has always been my hope that our Student Ministry would always be about Jesus and not about me at all. Even though I've known deep down that I was wrapping up my time at Velocity Student Ministries I will admit that it has been hard to let go. But through it all I hope that Jesus has been lifted high. We have stated that our goal at Velocity Student Ministries is to propel students toward Jesus. It has been my hope and prayer that my entire tenure as the Student Ministries Pastor was to faithfully point our leaders and students toward Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Pensa  
Student Pastor

## WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

This past year was a fruitful year of growth and development in the Worship Arts ministry of First Free Church. One of our major focuses over the last few years has been the development of leaders on the platform on Sunday morning.

Emma Delisi continues to do an outstanding job as our Worship Associate and is expanding her capabilities not just as a song leader or team leader but as someone who is thinking more deeply about the formational practices of worship beyond singing and preaching. This includes the historic liturgical practices of not just public scripture reading but curating responsive prayers, affirmations of faith, and historic Christian confessions.

Before she welcomed her new child into the world, Ellie Nordell regularly led us in worship. Along with Emma and Ellie, we've also had one of our high school students in Velocity, Lucy Kobielush, leading us in song more frequently. Lucy also got the opportunity to help plan and lead all of the songs on a Sunday morning this past ministry year and did an excellent job. You can expect to see more of that in the future!

We are also developing "music directors" within our team who help coordinate song arrangements and provide specific musical direction to the band on any given week. This role has been led most frequently by guitarist Noah Neuman (who will be stepping into increasing leadership during my sabbatical this summer) but has also been done with excellence by DJ O'Neil and Allen Guindon periodically throughout the year as well. While I still love the opportunities I have to lead our congregation in worship on Sunday mornings, I find myself even more energized these days by the opportunity to lead our growing number of leaders in our Worship Arts ministry and to see how the unique gifts God has given them get expressed in our church community.

Our ministry doesn't just consist of what happens on the platform on Sunday mornings. We also have a thriving tech team led by Dan Fergus, who serves largely unnoticed behind the scenes each week to make sure lights, sound, slides, and our livestream all facilitate the kind of environment where each person can come and connect with God in worship. We also have our Christmas Orchestra team, who had over 30 participants this past Advent season. We deeply value the time and energy it takes from those serving on this team to prepare and to lead us in a different expression of worship during the Advent season.

In both our Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter art galleries, we had excellent participation from a number of visual artists of all ages and skill levels. In the past year, we saw an increase in participation due to the contributions of artists in our Created to Create group led by Gayle Gilman and Marlene Maloney. I love that people in our church are catching a vision for the role of the arts in worship that extends beyond music and singing, and I am excited to see how this group might continue to grow in the future.

In the months of June and July, I will be on my first-ever sabbatical (which I am very grateful for). In my absence, many of these leaders I have already mentioned will be stepping up to the plate to take on an increased role. Your prayers for them and vocal encouragement towards them when you see them will go a long way in affirming them in their work and service to God and our church community.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Anleitner  
Worship Pastor

## **FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

The Faith Community Nurses (FCNs) Jeanine Bruen and Allie Danielson (staff members) along with Dee Huanca and Maureen Juarez (FCN volunteers) worked together to serve the congregation. This ministry could not happen without the assistance of our wonderful volunteers that visit and care for our church body.

We continue to visit and make phone calls to those who are homebound and/or hospitalized. We also have the privilege of coming alongside those who are not homebound but have other issues of concern. Our dedicated visitors and FCNs have made just over 200 visits since last May. Since last July, we have sent out almost 100 greeting cards. We hosted another visitation gathering in April, and we had eighteen people attend. We had a mix of seasoned visitors and others that were wanting to learn more about visitation. We had a time of education focused on mental health and were able to talk about available resources for our visitors. Three participants took the visitation class this year. Jeanine continues in the role of faith builder for MomCo (formerly MOPS/MOMSnex.) The Wellness Advisory Team will continue to meet this year to provide support and advice to the FCNs.

Additional areas of ministry which were overseen or carried out by the FCN's included the following:

- Sending gifts for new babies and high school graduates
- Teaching CPR class to 9 participants
- Expressions Support Group for those with chronic illness continues to meet twice a month as facilitated by Dee Huanca and Gayle Gilman
- Distributing prayer shawls made by volunteers
- A greeting card ministry facilitated by First Free kids
- Gifts and cards distributed to those who are homebound during both Christmas and Easter
- Organizing an estate planning class
- Sympathy cards sent to those who lost loved ones or were going through challenges
- Participation in Wednesday Night Prayer group
- Staffing the First Aid Station for VBC and the neighborhood block party
- Coordinating meals and transportation as needed
- Led and participated in Women's Neighborhood Bible Study
- Members of the Caring Commission
- Met with metro FCNs to share resources and offer support
- Engaged in continuing education through the Faith Community Nurse Network
- Addressed health and safety issues of the church

The following people went to be with Jesus since our last report: Grant Butterworth, Lorraine Kalb, Dorothy Young, Evelyn Peterson, Anne Johnson, Melvin Swanson, Marie Kingstom, and Margo Beckett.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Bruen and Allison Danielson  
Faith Community Nurses

## **CARING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

The Caring Commission has the privilege of helping to care for our church body. We do this by coordinating special church gatherings, overseeing the church kitchen, and using the benevolent fund to meet the needs of our congregation and community. This was my first year on the Caring Commission. It has been a blessing to see the work of this commission and how God moves the people of First Free to generously care for others.

When needs arise in our congregation, the caring commission is able to use benevolent funds to provide relief and encouragement. Last year, we helped with medical and dental bills, car repairs, rent, utilities, groceries, gas, gifts of encouragement after illness and injury, Christmas gifts and many other needs. We've also had opportunities to use benevolent funds to support other ministries in the church such as Created to Create, Expressions, the Housing Committee, and Faith Community Nursing. Our Faith Community Nurses, Jeanine and Allie, serve on the Caring Commission and are an important connection between our commission and the needs of our congregation.

Courtney Hunter continues to serve as our church kitchen coordinator. She orders donuts and coffee, coordinates volunteers to serve during Sunday morning fellowship times, and keeps an eye on supplies and overall organization in the kitchen. Courtney planned the Harvest of Praise pie social and the Twin Cities Marathon community donut time, despite the marathon cancellation this year. Thank you for your service, Courtney!

Phyllis Nordin continues coordinating funeral receptions and recruiting volunteers to assist with this ministry. Thank you, Phyllis!

The Caring Commission organized the food and hygiene drive in November as well as the Lake Nokomis picnic last summer. We also partnered with Creekside and Velocity student ministries by purchasing supplies for two service projects.

It is truly a blessing to see this congregation caring for its own. Thank you for faithfully giving to the benevolent fund and entrusting the Caring Commission to disburse these funds as needs arise. May God lead and direct us as we continue to minister to those around us.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Garcia  
Caring Commission Chair

## OUTREACH COMMISSION 2024

*"Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples".  
1 Chronicles 16:24*

Our Fall Outreach Weekend took place on Sunday, October 15. David and Patsy Alfors spoke during the education hour in the gym and shared about their ministry in Cameroon and their 4 decades of service! (They retired in December). At the same time, the youth that went on short term mission trips (Lenka, Adela and Petra Bragg - Czech English Camp, and Lauren Koch - Tanzania) shared with the middle and high school students. During the church service, Ken Warwick (Reach Global) preached.

Our Winter Outreach Weekend took place on February 24 & 25. The theme was "Doing Good" and reflected the current sermon series. On Saturday morning, 100+ volunteers of all ages gathered in the gym and spent their morning building dressers to donate to Bridging, a local non-profit that works to secure household goods for those in need. Volunteers also cooked breakfast, donated blankets and pillows, and created handmade cards for the dresser recipients. Sunday morning during the education hour, the Housing Committee shared about the history and ministry we are part of through the ownership and rental of three houses across the street from church. Volunteers have worked on landscaping, maintenance, and repair of these properties, as well as welcoming and creating friendships with the families who live in these homes. In addition, Wendy from Arrive Ministries shared about the work her organization does to welcome refugees and immigrants. She also encouraged us in our solid partnership with Arrive as we all work to welcome and house new neighbors. Many people showed interest in joining the mission work across the street!

Other Outreach highlights include:

- Grace Stoelzing shared about her exciting ministry to college students in Wyoming.
- Sam Rottman shared his tremendous piano gifts with us along with his amazing testimony of a Jewish man becoming a faithful follower of Jesus.
- Three commission members toured New Life Family Services, a ministry we support, to get an inside look into the many needs they are meeting in Minneapolis.

The Outreach Commission provides support for short term missionaries who come to us with requests. We look forward to hearing how Christ will use these servants to spread the Gospel this upcoming summer. Lenka, Adela, and Petra Bragg will return this summer to the Czech Republic along with Kyle Bragg, Liz Koch and Kim Sorensen to serve at an English Camp in partnership with Josh Krato (EFCA) and the local Czech church. Lauren Koch will be traveling to India with Teen Missions. Please take time to pray for these trips as our congregation is being Christ-sent beyond our borders.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Sorensen  
Outreach Commission Chair

## PROPERTY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024

This past year has seen many changes within the Property Commission. First off, the finance side of Property and Finance was dropped and reassigned. This was done to help the Property Commission concentrate on the nuts-and-bolts side of things and not have to get bogged down with dollars-and-cents. This has been a very welcome change as it has allowed us to focus our energies on becoming more intentional in our property decisions. We have been developing a system for identifying projects that need to be done right away, in the near future, or many years down the road. Our hope is that when big projects come, it won't be a surprise and we will be able to proceed with those projects in a prudent way.

This past fall/early winter we had one large project that required immediate attention and that was the steam line that runs between the old section of the church to the gymnasium. The line had rotted away after twenty years of use, and it finally needed to be dealt with. We secured two bids for this project and in the end decided to go with MMC to replace the line. The project went very smoothly and even the weather cooperated. The project came in under budget and should be good to go for the next 30 years. The parking lot on the southwest side of the church still needs to be repaired from where they dug up the steam line. That project will start this spring.

As of May, we will have a new contract with Heathers regarding the use of the south parking lot. It was determined that the current agreement needed to be reworked so that Heathers bore more responsibility for the wear and tear of the lot.

Another big change that happened this year was the creation of the Housing Committee. This committee was formed as a subcommittee to the Property Commission. Their aim is to deal specifically with the needs of the three homes we own across the street from the church, and maybe more importantly, to work with the families that live in those homes. This committee has worked to repaint, reroof, landscape, and remodel a lot of the houses.

This past year we needed to have an inspection with the city for all three houses. As part of this inspection there was a lot of work that needed to be done. The Housing Committee took this on over the course of three weekends. With the help of over 40 volunteers, we were able to get all three homes ready for inspection. All of this could not have been done without so many from the church coming together to contribute in whatever way they could. I'm reminded of Nehemiah 4:6 *"So we built the wall, and the wall was joined together unto half the height, for the people had a mind to work."* Many people, with a mind to work, can accomplish A LOT!

We were also able to help one of our tenants, Fatumata and her sons, "graduate" from our tiny home at 5147 Chicago, to a home of their own. That was a very special event for all who have been involved with her and her family. This house is currently vacant as we remodel it and get it ready for its next tenants. The Housing Committee is currently working with other churches and organizations to see how they can better serve the families we house across the street in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Koch  
Property Commission Chair



## HOUSING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The Housing Committee had a busy year for the ministries on the three houses. Through the summer of 2023, we focused on preparation for the city rental property inspection of the three houses in early fall. Many volunteers from our congregation were involved with the leadership of Jon Boyum on fixing both interior and exterior issues that may raise a flag to the inspector, including replacement of a garage roof. We passed the inspection in September with a couple minor issues to follow up. While working on these issues, God brought opportunities for our people to interact with the three families and they all appreciated our work. We also heard very positive feedback from the neighbors witnessing the love our church has demonstrated to these families. The friendship with these families continues to grow. A few people from our church were invited to the 40th day celebration of the newly born baby girl from the Afghanistan family in the middle house.

At the end of 2023, the family in the north house informed us that they were closing on their own house at the end of January. Everyone was excited for them and a team was formed to help the family move. Furniture was donated including a new mattress. The Caring committee covered the rental for the moving truck rental. A dozen people showed up on the moving day to help and lunch was provided for the family. The family was overwhelmed by the love from our church. People continue to support the family to this day after they moved out, which separates our ministry from a typical landlord tenant relationship.

During the Outreach Sunday in February, the Housing Committee paired with the Outreach Commission to present our ministry to the congregation. In the first hour, John Symington explained the history of the houses. Wendy from Arrive Ministries explained the need for refugees. David McCoy showed a recording of his interview with the family in their new house after they moved out of the north house. Pastor Jay concluded with calling for more people to be involved in our ministry. A survey was given in the end. The congregation expressed strong interest. 20 people signed up for the Good Neighbor Team to build a relationship with the families. 18 people signed up for the maintenance team. During the second hour service, another video was shown to explain the history of the three houses and people who have lived there in the past, including youth pastors, missionaries and immigrants of our church members.

With the north house vacant, it was time to update the house for the next family before moving in. A few captains stepped in to lead projects in the kitchen, bathroom, basement, painting, flooring and exteriors. Volunteers helped on work days with maintenance and the Good Neighbor Team. People not only donated their time and expertise but also building materials. We are planning to finish the update in early July. Meanwhile, David McCoy leads the Good Neighbor Team to prepare for the next family. Training from Arrive Ministries will be provided to a group of committed people to equip them to love and serve refugees in a knowledgeable and prepared way. Sandra Ogren, a new member of the Housing Committee, is also working on booklets, leases and handbooks to introduce the mission of our ministry and the logistics of living in an American house in a clear and friendly manner.

It's been a packed and fruitful year for the Housing Committee. God has been so faithful to us in all sorts of ways. We look forward to another era of the ministry to take off next year.

Respectfully submitted,

Hong Gu  
Housing Committee Chair

## TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

This passage in 2 Corinthians sums up the fiscal year for me:

*"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."*

We stand on the claim that all grace and provision come from God, and as Treasurer, I can say that His generosity manifests itself in our body of believers at First Free. We thank God for His continued seed for the harvest and pray we continue to be faithful stewards in the years ahead.

### **Actual vs Budgeted Income and Expenses**

On a year-to-date basis, giving is below our seasonally adjusted budgeted amount. Based on historical averages, we estimated giving to be at \$961,229 as of March 31, 2024. Actual giving at March close was \$932,781 or \$28,448 less than budget. Actual expenses are \$951,036 vs. budgeted \$945,112 as of March 31, 2024, or \$5,924 over budget. We are expecting spending to exceed the budget this fiscal year, by approximately \$75,000. This is largely explained by significant unbudgeted property projects; i.e. the church steam line repair and preparing the rental houses getting up to code for inspection. We will use reserves to cover the shortfall. With our aging building and growing programs we are proposing a slight increase in next year's budget that will include money set aside for property reserve.

### **Balance Sheet**

We are grateful that our balance sheet remains healthy, and we have reserves to fund ministries and to address any challenges that come our way. As of March 31, 2024, our cash and liquid assets stand at \$488,150; \$73,000 lower since last year's Treasurer's report. We continue to carry NO debt.

### **Achievements**

We made significant progress in improving our financial capabilities this fiscal year with the establishment of the Finance Committee which includes Tim Audette (chair), Lindsay Robinson, Kyle Bragg and myself. The goal is to develop a team of people to oversee our financial efforts, rather than just the treasurer. We have had more hands to work on giving projections, reporting and related follow-up and much needed budget preparation. This provides more time to look at the big picture and present our congregation and council with the information needed to address opportunities and challenges currently and in the future.

It was a joy again to work with First Free ministry leaders and assist them in their ministries. A wonderful seed planted this year was Carrie Boyum's work to establish the Glenn Ahlgren Camp Scholarship Memorial which will encourage our campers to invite their friends who have not attended Camp Shamineau before. Camp Shamineau is where Glenn became a believer, and his desire was to see as many kids be able to go to camp as possible. Another joy was to help our Outreach Commission fund several special events, such as the Outreach Serve day in late February. It was wonderful to see a gym full of the First Free community putting together fifty dressers for people in need of housing and furnishings.

Financial efforts we will be working on in the next fiscal year:

- Create a comprehensive property & facility capital plan, which will provide more accurate budget projections
- Establish formal operating and property reserves and related policies on their use

- Evolve and refine the finance team roles and activities

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

- Continued financial health and unity for our church
- Wisdom aligning our financial efforts with our calling

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Burns  
Treasurer

**FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH**  
**PROPOSED BUDGET 2024-2025**  
**July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025**  
**as of April 21, 2024**

FEFC Proposed FY24-25 Budget Status	Actual FY23-24 Budget	April 21 2nd Council Review Proposed FY24-25		
		(Decrease)/ Increase Amount	(Decrease)/ Increase Percentage	
60700 Outreach Commission	170,550.00	175,975.00	5,425.00	3.2%
<b>Outreach/Missions (outside the church):</b>	<b>170,550.00</b>	<b>175,975.00</b>	<b>5,425.00</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
50100 Admin & Operating	72,300.00	82,190.00	9,890.00	13.7%
60100 Worship	23,105.00	23,650.00	545.00	2.4%
60200 Children's Ministry	30,600.00	32,200.00	1,600.00	5.2%
60300 Student Ministry	79,000.00	64,500.00	(14,500.00)	-18.4%
60400 Faith Community Nurses	2,575.00	2,575.00	0.00	0.0%
60500 Caring Commission	30,200.00	32,100.00	1,900.00	6.3%
61600 Adult Ministries	22,163.57	21,445.00	(718.57)	-3.2%
<b>Church Ministry (programs &amp; administration):</b>	<b>259,943.57</b>	<b>258,660.00</b>	<b>(1,283.57)</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>
		0.00		
51000 Personnel	651,970.62	676,888.09	24,917.47	3.8%
<b>Staff Expense:</b>	<b>651,970.62</b>	<b>676,888.09</b>	<b>24,917.47</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
		0.00		
50500 Property & Facility	171,702.00	194,380.00	22,678.00	13.2%
<b>Facility Expense (includes rental properties):</b>	<b>171,702.00</b>	<b>194,380.00</b>	<b>22,678.00</b>	<b>13.2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,254,166.19</b>	<b>1,305,903.09</b>	<b>51,736.90</b>	<b>4.13%</b>