



FIRST FREE

CHRIST CENTERED + CHRIST SENT

AN EFCA CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

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CHURCH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ~ Psalm 90:1-2, NIV*

Thank you First Free Church family for your support and prayers this past year for me and the entire Council.

The past year was a year of transition on our church staff. Joel Sutton retired at the end of 2024. Jay Pound stepped in at the beginning of 2025 as our new Senior Pastor. Also at the start of 2025, Paul Anleitner moved from the Worship Pastor position to a new role as Associate Pastor. Last summer, Jason Pensa left his role as Student Pastor, and Jake Weikel was called and accepted a role as our new Student Pastor. Other staffing updates include Emma Delisi's change from Worship Associate to Worship Director, and the addition of a Music Director, Noah Neumann. Thank you to all of our staff members who faithfully serve our congregation and our Lord.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize all of the Council members who serve with me. First, I'd like to thank our outgoing members. Tim Audette has served as Vice Chair for the past six years. He also served for four years during the 2010s — what a legacy of service! Joel Burns stepped in to fill an immediate vacancy in the Treasurer role and has done an excellent job the past three years. Jon Boyum has faithfully served as Secretary for three years and served as a Council member for three years prior to that. And finally, John Symington has served for six years on the Council, building on his many years of dedication to First Free.

I was very happy that Lindsay Robinson agreed to move into the Treasurer position from her existing Council member position. It is a privilege to serve with Lenka Bragg, Casey Foss, Becki Kobiellush, David McCoy, and DJ O'Neill who will continue as Council members in the coming year. I'm also excited to have Jon Sorensen joining us as our new Vice Chair, Steve Rose returning to the Council as Secretary after more than ten years, Steve Mondy will be coming back to us after about ten years as a Council member, and last but not least, Ryan Bonniwell and Hannah Dittmer joining us as first-time Council members.

Looking back on the past year, I'm really thankful for God's blessings and excited for what's ahead. I believe God has amazing things in store for our church, and I hope you're just as ready as I am for what's next.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Olson
Council Chair

SENIOR PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2025

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about" ~ Acts 1:4, NIV

In Acts 1, the disciples — facing a significant transition in leadership, are explicitly advised to wait and see what God is going to do. But waiting can be especially difficult, especially when we are leading. We feel pressure just to move anywhere, to do anything. But Jesus tells the disciples to wait, because while they will be leaders in the church, it is still Jesus' church, and he is the one with the plan.

Jesus' disciples do wait, and in Acts 2 they are rewarded, just as Jesus promised. They receive the Holy Spirit and are immediately filled with power. But they are also filled with clear purpose — they now see what God is doing, they join him, partnering in his work and serving his purposes. The same group that one chapter earlier was still wondering if the Kingdom of Israel would be restored are now proclaiming the gospel with power. Because they have partnered with God in what God was doing, the Lord added to their number daily.

It only seems like a few weeks ago that I was officially called to be the new Senior Pastor, and I was looking ahead to a year of overlapping ministry with Pastor Joel. Somehow, that year came and went, and now the first year following Pastor Joel's retirement is nearly half over. Among a great many other things, these past five months have made me grateful for the year before, when I had the opportunity to begin transitioning to this new role while Joel was still here to provide help, guidance, and advice.

Eighteen months ago, when we started this transition, my intention was to use this first year to wait and to listen, to watch for the places in our church and community where God was already moving and working. Rather than rushing into a bunch of new things, or just assuming we should keep doing all of the same things, we wanted to take time to listen. Together with the staff and council, over the past six months, we have been doing just that.

One of the areas where that is already bearing fruit is in our staff. Only one out of our four full-time ministry staff from 2024 is in the same position today (Carrie). Everyone else is either new or in a new role. That is, by any measure, an enormous amount of change and transition. And yet, we are fortunate at the same time to have such incredible continuity. Over the past six months, I have enjoyed watching everyone grow into their new roles, using their gifts in new and different ways. I am impressed by Emma and Noah, who have moved seamlessly into leadership roles in our worship ministry. Jake has not only hit the ground running in our youth ministry, he has been a great fit with our staff and church. I know many of you have already enjoyed Paul's expanded opportunities to preach and teach. And of course, Carrie's passion for family ministry continues to draw new families. I am confident that you will continue to see God working in new and fresh ways as our team grows into our new roles.

Another area where I have seen God's hand clearly is in the people he brought and continues to bring to our congregation. Before covid, churches had already done a great deal of self-sorting: by musical preference, by socio-economic groups, by political affiliation. Covid rapidly pushed that trend further. But in many ways, First Free continues to defy that trend. We remain a church that brings together people across many lines that increasingly divide our nation and communities. We are wonderfully

multi-generational. If you are a second grader that regularly attends Creekside for one year, I know that you will come to know and recognize not just other kids, but adults across several generations who genuinely care for you and invest in you. I love that in this highly charged political season, God continues to draw together people who vote differently on a great many things. That is an increasingly rare and poignant testimony of the power of Jesus to tear down the walls that divide us. I have no doubt God has done this for a purpose, and I am eager to join him in this ongoing work of the gospel.

Finally, I'll close with some comments on the general trends in our ministry. Sunday attendance continues to trend upward. On Easter Sunday each service saw more people than the corresponding service last year. That has been true nearly every Sunday this year. Community Groups on Sunday continue to grow. MomCo (formerly MOPS) has surged back, and includes a majority of women who are not First Free attenders. God is at work, to extend our reach outward as he continues to draw new people through our doors. For me, this has been a very fast and exciting six months. It has also been a very humbling six months, as I recognize, like the disciples in Acts 2, that while I am highly privileged to contribute to what God is doing here, God is the one doing the work. God has brought together a great team on our staff and council. He has called an incredible group of leaders and volunteers, and has knit together a congregation that embodies his gospel. I feel grateful just to be part of it, and excited to see where God leads us next.

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel!

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Pound
Senior Pastor

ASSOCIATE PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT 2025

This past ministry year has been an exciting season of leadership transition and development. Our worship arts ministry had been intentionally moving into a team-leadership approach for nearly two years with more voices and musicians leading our congregation in song and prayer. In January of 2025, as Pastor Joel transitioned into retirement, we were blessed to have Emma Delisi and Noah Neumman take that next step into becoming our Worship Director and Music Director.

Emma has not only carried on the vision of having culturally relevant and theologically rich expressions of worship, but has collaborated with Noah to hone our unique sound of worship. We feel it matches the unique culture of our multi-generational church community. We continue to see multiple leaders beyond Emma and Noah frequently lead our music as we champion a culture of ministry that seeks to empower all those that God has called.

As I transitioned into Associate Pastor in 2025, I have not only been working alongside our worship ministry leaders, but also with our Community Group and Small Group leaders to discern what makes those groups most fruitful and to identify areas of growth for our adult ministries. We hope to become more effective in our discipleship and spiritual formation. This has coincided with a nine-month ministry consultation with Clarity House, a ministry consulting firm that helps churches clarify their vision and mission.

During this process, it became clear that one area for growth was developing clear “front doors” for those who are not connected to Christian community. We hope for people to find a place to get connected and potentially begin or rekindle a journey of discipleship to Jesus. This spring we have launched a new initiative called Front Door Communities to do just that, and I’m excited that we have several communities who are launching this spring that will be amazing front doors for neighbors, friends, coworkers, and family to get to meet people in Christian community around activities that celebrate God’s goodness in our culture.

As I’ve been able to hand off more of the production, technical, and administrative aspects of Sunday worship to other competent leaders, it has set me free to connect with more people across our community on Sunday mornings and during the week. This allows me to take on a broader view of our church's life and has been a joy for me to pursue. Looking ahead to our next sermon series on spiritual formation and the dreams we have for our next ministry year excites me. I am thankful for the continual prayers, hours of service, and financial contributions of our church community that make this all possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Anleitner
Associate Pastor

CREEKSIDE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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. 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 (Kinder–5th gr) 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 primarily learning from the book of Acts and will conclude the school year in Revelation. This spring we wrap up a four-year walk through the Bible. On Sundays, we average 45 kids (birth–5th gr). We have a group of 45 adults who are leaders on Sundays and 30 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 averaged 44 kids in 1st–5th grade on Wednesday nights. We have 20 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, hikes to Minnehaha Creek, wacky hair night, games on the front lawn, movie night, and Shamineau night. All of our Club groups helped with service projects this year including making sandwiches for The Sandwich Project, decorating Valentine cards and placemats for seniors at Ebenezer Ridges, and making holiday cards for family members, friends, and church seniors. All of our Club groups use the Dig In curriculum. The 1st–3rd graders focus on the Foundations of Faith. The 4th & 5th graders focus on The Heart of God. Wednesday nights are a time of fun, play, relationships, and discipleship for 1st–5th 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 4th & 5th 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 127 campers join us for the week and over 100 volunteers to help make VBC possible. The theme was *Scuba: Diving into Friendship with God*.

Camp Shamineau

Last summer 48 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. We pray that kids' lives are changed and transformed because of their time away from home 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, 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. Praise God for all who are called and willing to serve the kids in our church body.

I always love when our kids get a chance to participate, and even lead, in the Worship Service on Sundays. It was a joy this past Advent to have many of our 4th & 5th graders read from the Bible the story of the birth of Jesus. It was meaningful to have the kids lead the congregation in a few Christmas songs. This past Palm Sunday was a sweet time of our kids leading the church through the reenactment of Jesus entering Jerusalem and the people saying, "Hosanna!" I find great value in having our kids in the Worship Service. Often our kids are in Children's Church for the second half of the service, but it's so great when families can worship together, learn from God's Word together, and grow closer to God in conjunction with the rest of the church body.

I am proud to work with the Creekside leaders and Church leadership who have the vision of empowering our kids to know God and to help them grow in their living relationships with Jesus Christ. I love working with our First Free kids. I am blessed to see them increase their faith as they KNOW God, GROW in God, and 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 2025



Introduction

This is my first year at First Free and my first annual report. It has been a great first year of ministry here! I've enjoyed leading the students and developing relationships with many of them. I have also enjoyed the support of the ministry staff and the host of volunteers who help to execute a full year of student ministry. I believe that throughout the year the students and I have been able to find our footing in this new season both for them and for me.

Velocity Wednesdays/Sundays

This year we have enjoyed strong numbers on both Wednesday nights and on Sunday mornings. Between both high school and middle school we are averaging about 70 students on Wednesday nights and 40 on Sunday mornings. On Wednesday nights, high school has completed a number of different teaching series. We've covered a selection of parables, the book of Ecclesiastes, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, and more! Meanwhile, the middle school has spent most of this year studying different characters and stories from the gospels. We have also had many different special Wednesday nights, such as Small Group night, a Middle School Fun Night, Bring a Friend night, and a few others. On Sundays, I have partnered with Tom Ives. We have been leading the high school through the book of Romans, while Doug and Tamar have led the middle school through Old Testament books, such as Esther and Jonah.

Special Events

One of our big focuses in Velocity this year was strengthening the sense of community in the youth group through various special events. Special events are opportunities for the youth group to hang out and have fun with each other outside of the normal Wednesday/Sunday rhythms. Some examples of special events include game nights, broomball, multiple "Coffee with Jake" events, and both a Guys Night and a Girls Night. Through these events, students from all grades have had more opportunities to make connections and form friendships. I also have enjoyed using these events as opportunities to connect with the students and get to know each of them. A few of these events even had promotional videos made for them, which the students and I have had a lot of fun filming and watching.

Terrace on Chicago

Terrace on Chicago is the largest youth event of the year. This year was a phenomenal success, as we had just over 175 attendees and surpassed our fundraising goal of \$25,000! None of this would have been possible had it not also been for the 100+ people who volunteered and helped make the night go as smoothly and successfully as possible. This is not only a great opportunity for our church congregation to directly support our student ministry, but it is also an opportunity for interacting with the students and for students to take ownership in the ministry. I myself had a lot of fun going around to each table and talking with each guest, making sure that both their food and their experience was wonderful.

Youth Worship

One success within Velocity this year, that has happened completely outside of my role, is the creation of our Youth Worship Band. John Stiles stepped up this year in recruiting students and, along with Johanna Holliday, has led those students through rehearsals and leading worship for us on Wednesdays one night a month. On those Wednesdays, the middle and high school students start the night worshipping together. The other leaders and I, along with many of the students, have greatly appreciated the opportunity to have worship on these nights. It is another great way in which students are given ownership and responsibility within the ministry. Also, it must be noted that DJ O'Neil has often led the middle school in worship on nights when we don't all have worship together. Providing opportunities for students to experience and participate in worship is definitely a huge win.

Student Ministry Team

Many of the special events and Wednesday night happenings would not have been possible without the help of the Student Ministry Team. It has been a lot of fun to work with students who have stepped up and expressed their desire to shoulder more responsibility and be more involved in what happens in Velocity. Our meetings often strike a good balance of fun and fellowship, as well as intentional Bible study and event planning.

It has been a great first year of ministry here at First Free. I feel like a good foundation has been laid, and my hope is to continue to build on it as my relationships with staff, students, and Jesus all continue to strengthen. My prayer is that the students will continue to be propelled towards Christ

Respectfully submitted,

Jake Weikel
Student Pastor

WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The past few months have been such a blessing! In my new role as Worship Director, I can't help but feel immensely thankful and grateful for the opportunity that I have been given. Being able to lead, work alongside, and be a part of the formation of the church as a whole is not something that I take for granted. Every Sunday morning these past few months at First Free has been full of special moments; connection with one another, and connection with the Father. Our hope is that the Worship Ministry at First Free will continue to further meaningful worship, through song, prayer, liturgical practices, and community.

Sitting down to write this report has reminded me of the long history that I have with First Free, and how influential worship was in bringing me to where I am today and the role that I have. I can remember standing on the church pews, when I was probably no more than seven years old, doing my best to read and sing along with the congregation and thinking, "wow, I would love to sing like the people up on the platform someday." Seven-year-old me could not have imagined that I would, in fact, be leading the very same church's worship many years later. I feel immensely grateful for this opportunity, and I cannot say thank you enough to the people within the church who have fostered so many children in their faith journeys—your impact is not unnoticed.

The Worship Ministry would not be what it is today without its dedicated volunteers. Each volunteer who serves our church through our Worship Ministry has such a large impact on the spirit of our church. We have many volunteers who have given their time and talents to our Worship Ministry for many years, while others have joined us within the last number of months. Ellie Nordell and Lucy Kobiellush have continued to take on leadership roles on Sunday mornings. Each of them have assisted in planning occasional services through song selection, scripture readings, and congregational prayers choices. They both continue to excel in these increased leadership roles. Our volunteers on the Tech Team, headed by Dan Fergus, also play an incredibly important role in assuring that our services run smoothly and are sonically captured for both our in-service congregation and for those who join our church services online. Dan has also stepped out of the balcony on multiple occasions to lead our greeting and announcement time—always in an engaging and enlightening manner!

Noah Nuemann, our Music Director, officially joined the staff here at First Free this past January. His experience, talent, and heart for First Free's Worship Ministry can be felt stylistically through new songs, refreshed hymn arrangements, and a highlighted emphasis on a variety of musical expressions. This past season of Lent, Noah's input into the sonic landscape of each Sunday led us all to the Cross on Good Friday and ultimately to the joy of Easter Sunday. Over the course of the next year, we are both looking forward to finding new ways to incorporate new sounds into our Sunday morning worship.

Over the next few months, both Noah and I are looking forward to further collaboration with Pastor Jay and Pastor Paul, as we deepen and further develop our Sunday morning rhythms. This includes highlighting congregational prayers every month, creating space for contemplative worship—through song or other reflective practices, highlighting our ministry and mission partners, incorporating Children's ministry on Sunday mornings, and more.

The prayer of the Doxology seems fitting to close this report, as we reflect on the meaningful worship from the past months and as we look forward to the year ahead of us.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

Emma Burns
Worship Director

FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The Faith Community Nurses (FCNs) Jeanine Bruen and Allie Danielson (ministry staff) along with Dee Huanca and Maureen Juarez (FCN volunteers) worked together to serve the congregation and community in 2025. We thank God for the assistance of the many wonderful volunteers that care for our church body. This year has held areas of grief and loss for those in our congregation, and it has been encouraging to see the ways our community has been able to come together to support individuals and families in their times of need.

One of the primary focuses in the FCN ministry is visitation. We visit and make phone calls to those who are homebound, hospitalized, or have other areas of concerns. Since last May, our dedicated visitors and FCNs have made almost 250 visits to people in our community. In that time, we have also sent out over 140 cards. We are thankful for our growing Wellness Advisory Team that continues to meet three times a year to give advice and counsel to the FCN ministry. One of the highlights of 2025 was hosting a presentation from NAMI about mental illness. We had over 100 people attend this presentation that was focused on creating caring faith communities. This year we started sending out grief booklets through Stephen Ministries. We have sent these out to approximately 24 families and individuals. A book and card is sent to those who have lost a loved one at intervals of three weeks, three months, six months, and eleven months. This has been a meaningful way to let people know they are continuing to be prayed over throughout the first year of losing a loved one.

Additional areas of ministry which were overseen or carried out by the FCNs included the following:

- Teaching CPR class to 13 participants
- Jeanine serving as Co-Coordinator at MomCo
- Dee Huanca and Gayle Gilman facilitating Expressions Support Group for those with chronic illness, which continues to meet twice a month
- Distributing prayer shawls made by volunteers. We are grateful for the help of the Outreach Commission who helped make an abundance of shawls during Outreach Weekend!
- Sending gifts for new babies and high school graduates
- Distributing gifts to those who are homebound during Christmas and Easter
- Leading a visitation class that had three participants
- Participating in Wednesday Night Prayer group
- Staffing the First Aid Station for VBC
- Coordinating meals and transportation, as needed
- Meeting with metro FCNs to share resources and offer support
- Engaging in continuing education through the Faith Community Nurse Network
- Addressing health and safety issues of the church
- Being members on the Caring Commission

The following people went to be with Jesus since our last report: Wayne Danielson, Frederick Dittmer, Anita Edwards, Joyce Longfield, Mae Olson, Marian Ortloff-Bagley, and Jim Rask.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Bruen and Allison Danielson
Faith Community Nurses

CARING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The Caring Commission has the privilege of helping to care for our church body. We do this by planning special church gatherings, overseeing the church kitchen, and distributing benevolent funds when hardships arise in our congregation and community. It has been a privilege to be part of this commission and to witness God moving among the people of First Free to care for one another in a variety of ways.

When needs arise in our congregation and community, the Caring Commission distributes benevolent funds to provide relief. Benevolent funds are financial donations specifically designated by the giver to be set aside in the Benevolent Fund. Last fiscal year, the Caring Commission used benevolent funds to help with medical bills, mortgage payments, financial relief after job losses, unexpected vehicle expenses, groceries, diapers, gas, gifts of encouragement after an illness or injury, gifts of comfort after the loss of a loved one, and many other needs. The Caring Commission was also able to use benevolent funds to provide gift cards to some members of our congregation and community at Christmas time.

Our Faith Community Nurses, Jeanine Bruen and Allie Danielson, continue to serve on the Caring Commission and are an important connection between our commission and the needs of our congregation. While many needs are shared with the commission by church staff members, anyone in our congregation can bring a benevolent need to the Caring Commission.

Courtney Hunter continues to serve as our church kitchen coordinator. Courtney manages kitchen supplies and coordinates volunteers to serve during Sunday morning fellowship times. Courtney keeps an eye on organization in the kitchen and is a resource for the many groups and ministries that use the kitchen throughout the year. In addition, she organized the Harvest of Praise pie social. Thank you for your service, Courtney! Phyllis Nordin continues blessing our congregation by helping to plan funeral receptions and organizing volunteers to assist with this ministry. Thank you, Phyllis!

Last July, we held our annual all-church summer picnic at Triangle Park. For the first time since covid, we returned to a shared picnic meal. We plan to continue with this tradition again this summer. In November, the Caring Commission organized the Food and Hygiene Drive to benefit Community Emergency Services. 1,326 pounds of food and hygiene items were donated to CES during this drive.

It is truly a blessing to see this congregation caring for its own. People have shared with me again and again what a comfort it is to feel the support and encouragement from this church in tangible ways. On behalf of many in our congregation and community that have been blessed by the generosity of this church, thank you for generously giving to the benevolent fund. On behalf of the Caring Commission, thank you for entrusting us to serve in this capacity. May God lead and direct us as we continue to minister to those around us.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Garcia
Caring Commission Chair

OUTREACH COMMISSION 2025

"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ~ Acts 13:47

Our Fall Outreach Weekend took place on October 5 & 6. On Saturday, we started with a delicious homemade breakfast and played a fun missionary trivia game on Kahoot! Missionaries Guy & Barb Hugo and Dave Boeltl shared about their impactful ministries to Native Americans in the US and Canada. Information posters of our supported missionaries were up around the gym, along with their prayer requests. We did a gallery walk of the posters and had a time of prayer for our missionaries. A few of our missionaries like Guy & Barb, Dave, Rick & Becky Mackey, and Phil & Cindy Read, set up ministry booths, and brought artifacts of their work and answered many questions. Missionary prayer cards were also on hand for attendees to take as a reminder to pray for this important work. On (Marathon) Sunday, Rick Mackey delivered the sermon on John 15 and gave an update on the work he & Becky are doing in the Dominican Republic.

Our Winter Outreach Weekend took place on February 8 & 9. The Saturday event was called "Super Serve Saturday". People served at:

- Legacy Thrift: helped to sort and organize items to get ready to sell; the proceeds go to mission work in Eastern Europe.
- Dorothy Day Center: prepared and served the lunch meal and cleaned up...blessed those most vulnerable in our cities.
- Union Gospel Mission: set up, served, and cleaned up the noon meal...blessed those most vulnerable in our cities.

People also worked on projects at church:

- VEAP Birthday Bags: assembled birthday bags of cake mix, frosting, candles, plates, napkins, and made personalized birthday cards. VEAP gives away 100-150 birthday bags each week to families who visit the food shelf.
- Chinese Student Welcome Bags: assembled welcome bags of gum, mints, Ramen, gift cards, and a personalized welcome card. Phil & Cindy Reed distributed these bags to new students at the U of M.
- Prayer Shawls/Blankets: made prayer shawls/blankets that our Faith Community Nurses give out to people who would benefit from them.
- Cleaning Nursery & Preschool Rooms: blessed our little ones by deep cleaning the nursery and preschool rooms.

The Sunday event started during the Sunday School hour with Ronn Kreps sharing about the history of Legacy Thrift (started by his parents), and its mission of reaching Eastern Europe for Christ, through MCEE (Minnesota Coalition for Eastern Europe). Proceeds from the thrift stores funnel to MCEE which in turn fund the mission projects overseas. Ronn shared stories of Christ doing powerful life transforming work in that part of the world. Lenka Bragg, our church representative at the MCEE meetings, shared about the projects she is championing in the Czech Republic. Ruslan Khmyz, President of Kiev Theological Seminary, just "happened" to be in the Twin Cities, and brought a greeting

as well. Tom Ives, the president of Reign Ministries gave the sermon on Sunday, reminding us of the power of short-term missions, and challenging us to be Christ-centered and Christ-sent whether at home or overseas.

Other Outreach highlights from the year included missionary visits and presentations from Grace Stoelzing, Katie Dungeon, Pastor Nubako & Claudine Selenga, and Ben Reece.

Thank you to those who pray for our missionaries here and abroad, for those that serve locally and globally, as well as those who volunteer their time to make the Outreach events run smoothly.

For those that want to continue to volunteer, our church serves at Legacy Thrift in Crystal the 4th Saturday of every month and serves at the Opportunity Center in Minneapolis the 2nd Saturday of every month.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Sorensen
Outreach Commission Chair

PROPERTY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

This year we have been working on projects that have helped to “spruce up” different areas of the church that needed to be updated. The Senior Pastor's office, as well as the Associate Pastors office received lighting and carpet upgrades. The landscaping was in much need of some attention and will be completely updated this May. The sanctuary carpet is being replaced this June, as well as the women's bathroom on the north end of the basement.

This coming year we will be tackling a few not so glamorous projects. Basement windows will start to be replaced as well as the ceiling and lighting and many of the classrooms. This will be a multi-year project, handled in stages. We will also be replacing more flooring in the basement hallway (say goodbye to the shuffle board), and the flooring on the steps and landings of the main entryway.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Koch
Property Commission Chair

HOUSING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

This past year the housing committee was full of moving, saying goodbyes to our old tenants, and welcoming the new ones. While we were renovating and preparing the north house for the next tenant, the search committee was looking for our new youth pastor. Among all the good opportunities in our church, one of the attractions for the candidates is housing available for the staff. Jake & Lauren Weikel moved into the little gray house (#5147) in June after their wedding. It was such a blessing to have them live across the street from the church and for us to support them as they moved here and got settled. Their parents were so happy to see where they were living.

During a recent examination by the assessor of the city of Minneapolis for the property tax exempt status, we reinstated the policy that our houses are not meant for people to stay more than two years so that we may help more people in need. A single mom had lived in the south house (#5155) for a number of years and graciously agreed to move out in September. Given the condition, the south house has been designated for staff and missionaries. After looking at it, it didn't take long for the Weikels to decide to move into the south house from the north house. John Symington led volunteers from the maintenance team to repaint the walls, varnish the hardwood floors, and deep clean the house. A lot of care and love were poured from our congregation and youth group to this lovely home for them.

In November, Arrive Ministries sent us a young refugee family from Afghanistan and they moved into the north house soon after the Weikels moved out. The Good Neighbor team, led by the Maloneys, quickly connected with them and helped them with paperwork, rides for appointments and other needs. In their letter to us, it says: "When we first came here, we thought we were alone and had no one. Now I feel the Good Neighbor team members are with us, and this gives us great hope. We are greatly grateful to you and your team." The husband is a skillful carpenter and wants to enroll in a construction school for a certificate. Without a driver license, he has struggled to find a job for his skill.

In a physical checkup of their toddler boy, lead poison was detected in his blood, which raised concerns to both the parents and health department of the city of Minneapolis. We did a test of the tap water and it met the standard. An inspection from the city didn't find any issues inside the house but a couple issues on the exterior need to be addressed. Hong Gu took a one-day training to get the certificate as a lead renovator, such that we could address them ourselves instead of hiring professionals.

After returning from the trip in their home country in October, the Afghanistan family in the middle house sought to live near a cousin who immigrated to the Twin Cities recently. They have been living in our house since 2021 and were ready for the next phase of their life. They found an apartment about the same size and similar rent in the building next to the cousin in Highland Park and moved out in December. We helped them move and were invited to their new place for tea afterwards. The new Afghanistan gentleman living in the north house also helped. It was promising for him to witness how our ministry has supported a refugee family similar to his through the past three years up to a point that they can "graduate" and take off on their own.

After a quick turnaround on the middle house, it was ready for a new tenant in February. However, the shutdown of funding and support from the federal government had a substantial impact on Arrive Ministries. All the programs for new refugees are paused, including the cousin of the family in the north house. A couple of existing refugee families that were already settled by Arrive Ministries were considered to move to our middle house. But neither has worked out. We have also contacted the office of EFCA to open the middle house for short term stay of their missionaries. We trust the Lord will lead us to the next tenant at the right timing.

Respectfully submitted,

Hong Gu
Housing Committee Chair

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:12-13 "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Like Paul, we're learning contentment and dependence on our Provider in all circumstances—including our finances. This year, the Lord has provided through engaged staff, active ministries, and a faithful church family. As we reflect on our financial position and prepare for the year ahead, we do so with gratitude and trust.

Actual vs Budgeted Income and Expenses

We're projecting a fiscal year surplus of \$26,501 compared to budget.

Fiscal Year	Historical Income	Historical Budget	Difference
2022-2023	\$ 1,126,598	\$ 1,128,335	\$ (1,737)
2023-2024	\$ 1,226,824	\$ 1,254,166	\$ (27,342)
2024-2025 projected	\$ 1,332,404	\$ 1,305,903	\$ 26,501

This includes nine months of actual income and three months of estimated income.

A key detail: our income this year includes \$121,778 in one-time, COVID-related federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) funds. Without these funds, we would be facing an income shortfall of \$(95,277).

On the expense side, we're projecting to be about \$28,000 over budget, driven mostly by personnel salaries.

Balance Sheet

As of March 31, 2025, our cash and liquid assets total \$325,780. We continue to carry no debt.

The council will be proposing that \$40,000 be designated toward the long-term church property capital expenditure plan, which was recently developed by the Property Committee.

Challenges

The council is beginning work on the 2026-2027 budget in light of recent giving trends.

This will require discernment and a clear ministry vision. As we look ahead, we'll evaluate all areas of the budget to ensure our resources align with where God is calling us to invest.

We believe we can support the 2025-2026 proposed budget, helped by the ERC funds and limited use of reserves. Like Paul, we're learning contentment in every season. This coming fiscal year will be a key step in establishing a sustainable path forward.

Achievements

We made a big leap forward in our financial capabilities this year thanks to a talented Finance Team:

- Tim Audette (Chair) - worked closely with Personnel and Property
- Lindsay Robinson - managed accounts payable

- Kyle Bragg - supported Student Ministries
- DJ O'Neil - brought strong collaboration and budgeting skills

We will all continue serving in these roles next year and are looking forward to building on this foundation with more connections and improvements.

Our Youth Ministry leaders under Jake did a fantastic job planning events and activities — a complex task that was handled with care and creativity. Jake and Doug also improved communication and coordination around trip planning and budgeting. In March, Terrace on Chicago raised \$25,000 for youth events, and while final expenses are still being tallied, they're expected to come in well under budget.

Lindsay and I continue to review payment requests, which gives us a window into all the ministry activity happening across our church. There are many great things going on, but I especially want to call out the many people caring for the church property and the rental homes across the street. The work being done is inspiring and full of love — may God bless it in ways we can't yet imagine.

Continued 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 2025-2026
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026
as of April 27, 2025

FEFC Proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget	Actual FY24-25 Budget	April 27 (Decrease)/ (Decrease)/ Council Approved FY25-26 Budget Increase Increase Amount Percentage		
60700 Outreach Commission	175,975	175,879	(96)	-0.1%
Outreach/Missions (outside the church):	175,975	175,879	(96)	-0.1%
50100 Admin & Operating Expenses	82,190	89,100	6,910	8.4%
60100 Worship Commission	23,650	19,350	(4,300)	-18.2%
60200 Children's Ministry Expenses	32,200	31,700	(500)	-1.6%
60300 Student Ministry Expenses	64,500	64,000	(500)	-0.8%
60400 Faith Community Nurses	2,575	2,575	0	0.0%
60500 Caring Commission Expenses	32,100	34,500	2,400	7.5%
61600 Adult Ministries Expenses	21,445	19,078	(2,367)	-11.0%
Church Ministry (programs & administration):	258,660	260,303	1,643	0.6%
			0	
51000 Personnel Expenses	676,888	666,600	(10,288)	-1.5%
Staff Expense:	676,888	666,600	(10,288)	-1.5%
			0	
50500 Property & Facility Expenses	194,380	201,300	6,920	3.6%
Facility Expense (includes rental properties):	194,380	201,300	6,920	3.6%
Total	1,305,903	1,304,082	(1,821)	-0.14%

*** In Fiscal Year 2025-2026 we will move \$40,000 from the ERC credit to a designated Property & Facilities reserve fund for Large building projects.