



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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Remember Easter BY JOEL SUTTON

Georg Gärtner, a young German man, found himself in North Africa in 1943 as part of Rommel's North African Campaign. If you know your history, Fredrick Montgomery, the pompous British field marshal, defeated Rommel at Tunis in 1943 and captured thousands of German young men. The British handed over these German prisoners to the Americans, and the Americans brought them to the United States for imprisonment.

Georg was one of those German prisoners and he was sent to Fort Denney, a prison camp in New Mexico. He thought: I'm condemned. I'm a prisoner of war. I was part of that Nazi war machine, and for the rest of my life I will live as a condemned man.

In 1945, Georg slipped past a guard, lifted up the fence, fled Fort Denney, and jumped aboard a passing freight train. He changed his name to Dennis F. Whiles, and found work as a lumberjack, a dishwasher, and laborer, moving from one job to another, constantly terrified his bosses would discover that he was a condemned man and send him back to the prison camp.

He married. At one point Georg became a ski instructor and in 1955 he joined a ski expedition that was formed to rescue

a train that had been caught in a blizzard in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Eventually his wife, tired of moving, said "I can't take this any longer. What's wrong with you? Why are we constantly moving like this?"

Georg then shared with her what he had never shared with anyone before—he was an escaped prisoner of war, a man condemned. She looked at him and said, "Go to the office of immigration and naturalization. The war is over." Finally, when he was 64 years old, he broke and went to the office of immigration and naturalization. They released him from the charges and made him a United States citizen.

As I read that story, I wondered, "How many times did somebody knock on Georg's door, and he went pale, thinking, 'They've shown up; somebody's found me out. It's the authorities. I'm a condemned man. They're going to put me back in prison again?'"

Then I thought about Christ-followers. How many of you live under a similar tension and pressure of feeling condemned? As you read this story, behind your relaxed smile, there is a sense of fear of being found out. Underneath there is a deep sense of guilt. Of shame.

Here is the good news of Easter: Because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross and His resurrection, you are no longer under condemnation. You are free.

Romans 8:1 tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Condemnation comes from the devil. And his purpose is to put you down and make you feel guilty and ashamed. When Satan condemns you, it can leave you with a sense of hopelessness.

Too often I find Christ-followers, children of the King, living under condemnation and guilt, thinking that they are listening to the voice of God. But it is not. It is the devil speaking.

This Easter, we need to remember what the Apostle Paul instructed his young protegee Timothy to do, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel." (2 Timothy 2:8).

Remember, what Jesus has done for you. Remember his love, his sacrifice, and his resurrection. And remember because you are in Christ, there is no condemnation. You are free to live as one of God's beloved children.

MEN'S NIGHT OUT

APRIL 3 @ 7:00 P.M.



First Free Guys (& kids!)—join us for snacks, games and the Men's NCAA Final on (several) big screens. This is a great, causal way to meet and connect with other men in the church, as well as a perfect opportunity to invite friends, neighbors or coworkers. We will have 9-Square, Gagaball, Half Court Basketball, Ping Pong and Carpetball. Please bring some chips, cookies or drinks to share. The event starts at 7 p.m., the game starts 8:20 p.m.

Save the date!

Creekside Family Party
Friday April 28th @ 6:00 p.m.



Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?
Contact the office at info@firstfreechurch.org

**OUR MISSION:
TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER**

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

June 19-23, 2023 9-12 noon

We are looking forward to Vacation Bible Camp this summer! VBC will be happening June 19-23 from 9 a.m.-12 noon at First Free. The cost is free and everyone is encouraged to invite friends. VBC is for all kids entering kindergarten - kids entering 6th grade. Younger children of VBC volunteers are invited to join our awesome Nursery & Preschool groups for the week.

The theme this year is STELLAR: Shine Jesus' Light. Kids will launch into an out-of-this-world adventure, which will leave an impression that will last for a lifetime. Kids will discover that Jesus is the light of the world, and that they can shine Jesus' light!

Kids will explore what it means to shine Jesus' light in everyday life! The Stellar Bible points for the week are:

- **When life feels dark, shine Jesus' light!**
- **When people don't get along, shine Jesus' light!**



- **When good things happen, shine Jesus' light!**
- **When people are sad, shine Jesus' light!**
- **When people need help, shine Jesus' light!**

Please join us in prayer that God brings the kids who need to hear the message of Jesus' light to VBC this year. Pray too that we'll have lots of volunteers who will pour into kids' lives.

Registration for kids and sign-ups for volunteers is coming in late April.

If you have any questions contact Carrie Boyum at carrie.boyum@firstfreechurch.org



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Our condolences to the family of Glenn Ahlgren who passed away at the age of 74.
- Our condolences to the family of Félix Juárez who passed away at the age of 77.
"To First Free members and friends: We are so thankful to our Church family for all the love, support, prayers, meals and conversations in the time of Felix's illness and passing. We are thankful that Felix is in heaven and someday we will be with him there. From: the Family of Felix Juarez."

TERRACE ON CHICAGO 2023



Thank you to you, our First Free church Family for making Terrace on Chicago such a huge success, we met and exceeded our goal of raising \$20,000. This will help ensure that every student who wants to be a part of one of our trips has the opportunity to do so. These trips help cement relationships and challenge students to grow in their disciple-making commitment to our Lord Jesus. Please be praying for our students as we prepare to go on various trips like District Blitz, the High School XJ Conference, the Middle School Adventure Trip and as nearly a hundred of us head to Fall Fling at Shamineau this October.

We had nearly 120 volunteers (both students and adults) to help make Terrace on Chicago a huge success and

it was so wonderful to see their smiling faces the next day at Church. This is a huge event and it takes a lot of planning, and man power to pull it off. I am so grateful for the team that has helped bring this event back to life after a three year hiatus.

Thank you for showing your support by attending and giving to this ministry, I am so humbled to be able to be a part of a Church and lead a ministry that is so generously supported by our congregation. You truly are helping in whatever small way to propel students towards Jesus. So thank you for support of Velocity Student Ministries.

-Jason Pensa



UPCOMING SERVICES

Good Friday Service April 7th, 7:00 p.m.

Easter Services April 9th, 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.