



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
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# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
APRIL 2024

## Follow Me BY PASTOR JAY POUND

My family has finally resumed watching season one of *The Chosen* (I know, I know, we are way behind, but we have read the books!). In a recent episode, Nicodemus, a Pharisee of some importance, has a late night meeting with Jesus (John 3). In the show, Nicodemus is not only receptive to what Jesus has to say, he is hopeful. He recognizes that in Jesus, God may be doing something surprising and wonderful; Nicodemus recognizes that Jesus may just be the Messiah he has long awaited for. Perhaps seeing this, Jesus calls Nicodemus to follow him.

The portrayal of Nicodemus is striking. His excitement, his hope—even his newly sprouting joy—are palpable. He desperately wants to believe, wants to accept that Jesus really is the Messiah. He is desperately curious to see what will become of his ministry, what he will say and do. And then, against all expectations, he receives an invitation to join Jesus, to follow him. Part of him wants to accept so badly. And yet, he

has a seat on the Sanhedrin. He is an important man—he is wealthy, and he has a high position in society. He has a lot to lose. And Jesus agrees. But the scene ends with Jesus inviting Nicodemus to think of what he might gain, what he might see, what God might do. Nicodemus remains torn and undecided, but as Jesus leaves, he reissues the invitation, “I hope you join me.”

The episode takes some creative license (as all adaptations must), but it also highlights quite poignantly the truth that following Jesus always comes at a cost. Neither in this episode, nor in John’s gospel, does Jesus rebuke Nicodemus for his wealth, or his position, or his station in society, let alone his love and concern for his family. None of these things, on their own, are sinful or evidence of sin. In fact, both Jesus and Nicodemus would likely have agreed that most, if not all of these, were good gifts given to Nicodemus by a generous God. But the question, honed in this scene to a fine

point, is this: has Nicodemus allowed these good gifts to come between him and his God? Can he let go, or do these gifts now have a grip on him?

This spring we are beginning a new sermon series called, “Letting Go of What Grips Us,” where we will be exploring what scripture has to say about stewardship, generosity, and contentment. I think one of the biggest challenges for Christians in our world and culture today is our relationship to money and possessions. These, rather than foreign gods, are the things that vie for our allegiance, the things most likely to come between us and God. Now, as then, Jesus calls each of us to follow him. And like Nicodemus, most of us are aware that we have a lot to lose. Will we let these good gifts hold us back? Or will we fix our eyes on what lies ahead, on what we might gain, on what God might do if we will only let go and follow him? We hope you will join us this spring as we learn together to let go of what grips us. 🙏

## April sermon series: *Letting Go of What Grips Us*

The more tightly we hold onto our money, the more tightly it holds onto us. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Biblical generosity is an exciting opportunity to partner with God to accomplish his mission. Join us for this new sermon series and rediscover four basic principles in scripture that will help you escape the trap of tight-fistedness and encourage you to live more open-handedly.

- April 7 • Stewardship: It’s Not Mine
- April 14 • Satisfaction: What Giving Gains
- April 21 • Simplicity: More is Less
- April 28 • Surrender: Trusting God More

Interested in learning more about First Free?  
Thinking about becoming a member?

## DISCOVERING FIRST FREE

APRIL 14 & 21  
During the 9:00 a.m.  
Community Hour

Sign up at  
[firstfreechurch.org/events](http://firstfreechurch.org/events)  
or contact the church office

## VACATION BIBLE CAMP SAVE THE DATES JUNE 17-21, 2024



Registration will open for kids and volunteers on April 26!  
VBC kick-off will be on Sunday, April 28 with the Donation Station in the foyer, postcards available to invite friends and neighbors, and fun treats for the church!

## Our Mission

TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED &  
CHRIST-SENT TOGETHER

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[instagram.com/firstfreechurchmpls](https://www.instagram.com/firstfreechurchmpls)

## Visitation Luncheon

What is visitation? Visitation combines a friendly visit with a prayer or Bible verse to encourage someone who may be in the hospital or someone that may be limited in their ability to get out of their home. We are blessed with many wonderful visitors from the First Free congregation!

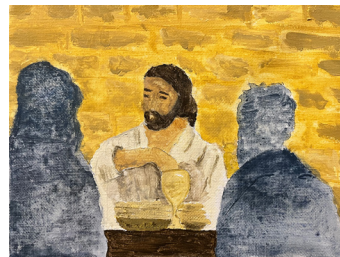


The Faith Community Nurse ministry is celebrating the work God is doing through our visitors on **Sunday, April 21 from noon to 1:30 p.m.** This gathering is also an opportunity for those interested in learning more about visitation. We will have a luncheon followed by a time of sharing and education. If you are interested in joining, please contact Jeanine Bruen or Allie Danielson at [nurses@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:nurses@firstfreechurch.org) or sign-up under the "Upcoming Events" page on the First Free website. Please let us know if there are any dietary restrictions we should be aware of. *We hope to see you on April 21!*

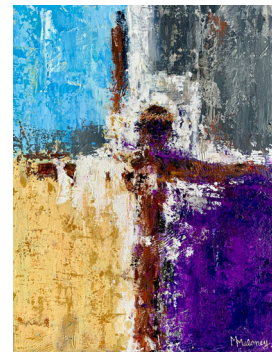
—Allie Danielson

## Lent/Easter Art

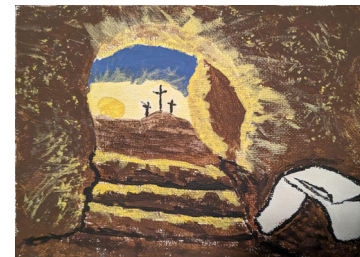
Some of the artwork submitted to our annual Lent and Easter art exhibition.



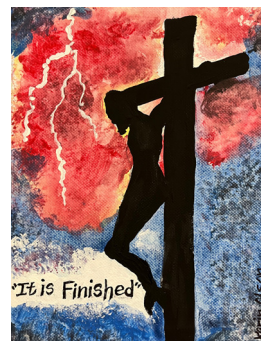
Melia Ives



Marlene Maloney



Luke Young



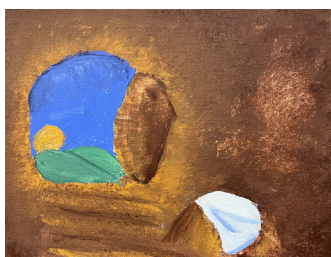
Karin Olson



Gayle Gilman



Ellie Young



Joanna Urbanz



Earl Wentzel



Wyatt Nordell

## TERRACE ON CHICAGO

In February 2008, one hundred and forty-five people enjoyed a grilled beef and/or fried halibut dinner at our very first Terrace on Chicago. The monies that were raised that year enabled students go to SEMP in Chicago and Costa Rica on a missions trip.

Since that initial Terrace on Chicago, hundreds of students, parents, and volunteers have served over 2800 gourmet meals. Each year a different theme with different foods were introduced, from a French Cafe, to a Nicaraguan meal, to one that served traditional Czech food.

Terrace on Chicago is our annual student ministry fundraiser. We do it for the purpose of sending our middle school and high school students on summer missions and ministry trips. But it does more than that. Parents and volunteer youth staff work together to make new friends, students dress up and learn how to serve, and those who come enjoy a delicious meal. It is a fun night of celebration!

This year's dinner's theme was that of a supper club with a Southern flare. Broasted Cornish game hen with hot honey sauce and dirty wild rice were served. The middle school students will be going south to Kentucky to visit the Ark Encounter and to do ministry with a church in Indiana. The high school students will be going to our national EFCA student ministry conference—Challenge—in Kansas City.

In the 16 years of Terrace on Chicago over \$200,000 has been given to support our students. This year, because of your generosity, we have already received over \$20,000. Thank you once again for your commitment to our students!

—Pastor Joel Sutton



## This Month@First Free

### MPLS SPRING BREAK-APRIL 5

There will be no Wednesday Creekside Clubs, Velocity Youth Group, nor Women's Bible Study on Wednesday, April 5. However, the Wednesday prayer meeting will take place as usual.

### GUYS' NIGHT OUT-APRIL 8

First Free men (& kids!)—join us for snacks, games, and the Men's NCAA Final on (several) big screens. Please bring some chips, cookies, or drinks to share. The event starts at 7 p.m., the game usually tips-off around 8:20 p.m.

### WOMEN'S GAME NIGHT-APRIL 13

Women of First Free—join us for an evening of laughter, community, and fun as we play games. Open to all women college-age and older. Those with a last name beginning with A-G are asked to bring a sweet snack to share; H-Z bring something salty.

### CREEKSIDE FAMILY PARTY-APRIL 26

All Creekside kids and family members are invited to join us on Friday, April 26 from 6-8 p.m. We'll have a night of food, fun, games, bouncy houses, crafts, and fellowship! This is a free event at First Free for all Creekside families and friends. An adult must accompany children.

### EMILY HOLLIDAY SHOWER-APRIL 28

There will be a bridal shower for Emily Holliday at the church at 1:00 p.m. Emily & Payton's gift registry can be accessed with this QR code.



## Church Family News

- 🎉 Congratulations to Tarin & Isaac Boyd on the birth of their son **Gideon Buck Boyd** on March 6.
- 🎉 Congratulations to Eliana & Jack Nordell on the birth of their son **Ronan Winter Nordell** on March 24.
- 🎉 Our condolences to the Beckett and Boldt families on the passing of **Margo Beckett** at 71, on February 28.

**Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?**  
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