

# FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Minneapolis

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# FIRST WORD

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

APRIL 2015

## NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS REASON TO HOPE

BY PASTOR JOEL

One of the commencement traditions at Harvard University is Senior Class Chapel. On the morning of their graduation, seniors gather in Memorial Church to hear the minister offer words of solace and encouragement as they leave "the Yard" to take their places in the world.

The 1998 senior class heard the unvarnished truth from the Rev. Peter Gomes, minister at Harvard. In his gentle ringing tones, Dr. Gomes took no prisoners as he began:

"You are going to be sent out of here for good, and most of you aren't ready to go. The president is about to bid you into the fellowship of educated men and women and,"—and here he paused and spoke each word slowly for emphasis, "you know just—how—dumb—you—really—are."

The senior class cheered in agreement.

"And worse than that," Dr. Gomes continued, "the world—and your parents in particular—are going to expect that you will be among the brightest and best. But you know that you can no longer fool all the people even some of the time. By noontime today, you will be out of here. By tomorrow you will be history. By Saturday, you will be toast. That's a fact. No exceptions, no extensions."

"Nevertheless, there is reason to hope! . . ."

That is the message of Easter!

The honest truth is that when we are honest with ourselves, we all recognize the fact that we fall short of God's glory, that we all are sinners, and that we all are "toast". There are no exceptions.

But the message of the resurrection of Jesus is, "Nevertheless, there is reason to hope!" Not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ, the King. The one who conquered death, and offered God's forgiveness and opened the way of salvation for each of us.

First and foremost, we are Easter people. As Easter people we have an Easter gospel, a gospel which means good news every day of the week and every day of the year.

In this edition of "First Word" we are focusing on the resurrection. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that the resurrection is "of first importance." And so during this month of April we are going to come back to the message again and again, "Nevertheless, there is reason to hope!"

### CURRENT SERMON SERIES: RESURRECTION REALITIES

April 5	Easter—Of First Importance	1 Corinthians 15:1-11
April 12	It All Comes Down to This	1 Corinthians 15:12-20
April 19	Lifeline	1 Corinthians 15:20-34
April 26	The Brand New You	1 Corinthians 15:35-49
May 3	It Doesn't Sting Anymore	1 Corinthians 15:50-58

## EMBARK ON AN ICY EXPEDITION WHERE KIDS OVERCOME OBSTACLES WITH GOD'S AWESOME POWER.

ANCHOR KIDS IN ROCK-SOLID BIBLE TRUTHS THAT  
WILL GUIDE THEM THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES.

**JUNE 22-26; 9AM-NOON  
FOR KIDS ENTERING GRADES K-6**

### APRIL 26TH: VBC KICKOFF!

- VOLUNTEERS REGISTER
- KIDS REGISTER
- EAT SNOWBALLS
- ROCK CLIMBING CRAFTS
- MAKE ROCKS & SNOWFLAKES

**MEET OUR "SHERPAS"!**

**LOOK FOR THE "DONATION MOUNTAIN"  
FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COULD DONATE**



### EVEREST DATES TO KNOW

**APRIL 26TH:** VBC KICKOFF

**JUNE 7TH:** DEADLINE FOR  
ACCEPTING DONATIONS

**JUNE 9TH & 10TH:**

VOLUNTEER TRAINING 6:30-8:30 P.M.

ATTEND ONE!

**WATCH FOR WORK DAYS TO COME!**

**QUESTIONS?** CONTACT BETH BROWN, EXPEDITION GUIDE OR JOANN BURNS, TRAIL GUIDE

**First Free's Mission — To help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.**



**FIRST FREE:  
OUR MISSION  
IS TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS**

**BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED  
& CHRIST-SENT  
TOGETHER**

**WANT MORE INFO?**

Visit [www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)

Visit our Facebook page!  
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**SEE MORE INFO AT:**  
[www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)

## ANNUAL CELEBRATION COMING!

Our Annual Celebration will be taking place on Sunday, May 3rd at 11 am.

We will hold a single worship gathering at 9:15 am with our fellowship time to follow and then come together in the sanctuary at 11:00 am for our Celebration. Childcare will be provided during both our worship and celebration.

The church council has made this decision for a couple of reasons:

1) We want this event to truly be a celebration of what God has been doing in our midst over the past year. We want our whole church family to be able to attend.

2) As we celebrate all God has done, we are hoping for an increased ownership of the church's mission and vision.

At our Celebration we will worship, rejoice in testimonies and vote on some important matters, i.e. our annual budget, Mike Graff as our full-time worship pastor, new council and commission members, and new church members.

Prior to our Celebration, we will be holding two **Town-hall meetings, Saturday morning, April 25th** from 10-11 am and **Wednesday night, April 29th** from 7-8 pm. These Town-hall meetings are being offered specifically for the purpose of answering any questions about our budget, Mike's new full-time status, or any other matter regarding the church's vision.

Annual reports (with our new proposed budget) and a Worship Pastor job description will be available on Sunday, April 19th.

As always, if you have any questions, you can call (612-827-4705) or email ([joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org)) Pastor Joel or Jeff Dutton, our church council chairman ([jefflisa92@gmail.com](mailto:jefflisa92@gmail.com)).

## BLESSINGS OF COMMUNITY

by Vanessa Beckett

Over the years, community group has been an integral part of Scott's and my life, whether it's been together or separate. Two years ago, Pastor Jay was reviving the community group ministry and Pastor Joel was preaching about being in community with one another. As the church has grown we felt less connected to the body and thought probably others felt the same way. We prayed about what was next for us as a family in ministry. Scott and I felt called to be more intentional about building community with other families who lived nearer to us, so we started a South Minneapolis family community group. God blessed us initially with four other families and then He grew our group to nine families at one point. Right now our group has seven families who live in South Minneapolis or Richfield. We're always open to have others join us. Whether we are having worship time with our kids, or studying God's word as couples, sharing and praying for one another, having a big family meal, date nights, having fun as families, or doing service projects together, the Lord has used it all to grow us in understanding of His word and how it applies to our lives. We are a group who strives to be transparent and have genuine community. Our goal is to have deep friendships rooted in God's love. The Christian life is hard to live on our own. It's so much better to walk through this life with good friends. We couldn't do it without our community group. They truly enrich our lives!



## UPCOMING @ FIRST FREE

### EXPRESSIONS — APRIL 12TH & 26TH FROM 3:30-5:30 P.M.

A time of journaling for those dealing with chronic illness or pain, join us from 3:30-5:30 p.m. in room 103.

### MEN UNITED — FRIDAYS @ 6:15 A.M.

Men United exists to train men to be who God designed them to be in their homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods through Biblical teaching, accountability, and a closer connection to Christ and each other. Men, join us Friday mornings at 6:15 a.m.

### THE DEEP — APRIL 15TH @ 6:30 P.M.

Come, be refreshed and encouraged. Join us for a time of worship and prayer at The DEEP, March 18th at 6:30 p.m. Childcare will be provided.

### MEN'S SOULSHARE — APRIL 18TH @ 9:00 A.M.

Men of all ages are welcome to join us for breakfast and fellowship on various Saturday mornings from now until May 2015. Contact Ross Olson with any questions at 612-824-7691.

### CLASS 101 — APRIL 19TH @ 4:00 P.M.

Interested in becoming a member at First Free? Check out our Class 101, April 19th at 4:00 p.m. to learn more about what it means to be a First Free member.

### VBC KICKOFF — APRIL 26TH

Join us on June 22nd-June 26th from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. as we encourage kids to know what it means to conquer our challenges with the help of God's mighty power!

## CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Our sincerest congratulations to the Graff family on the birth of their son Braeden Jude Graff, born on April 7th at 8:49 a.m. weighing at 7lbs and 4oz. Congratulations Graff family!

Our deepest condolences to the Carlson family on the loss of their parents, Richard and Marilyn Carlson.

Thank you to everyone who attended Terrace on Chicago this year. The students raised over \$14,000 for summer their summer mission trips!

## GOD'S FUTURE IN OUR PRESENT

 by Jay Pound

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

One thing that we share with Jesus' contemporaries is that we too long for God's promised future. We long for the time when God will "set things to rights," when He will do justice, when evil will be swept away. We long for the time when God will free creation from corruption and make all things new. And like many of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries, we long for the time when we will be made new—resurrected, and able again to dwell in the presence of our God.

For us, as for them, the bulk of that still lies in the future, with one notable exception—Jesus is risen! And this is part of what made that first Easter so shocking. Jesus' followers may have been expecting a resurrection, but—like us—they expected it to happen in God's future. Just like us, Jesus followers expected the resurrection to happen all at once, everyone together, along with everything else that accompanies God's future. So imagine their surprise when they found that Jesus had been resurrected right now, in their present, before the judgement, before the renewal of creation, and of course before all of the rest of us.

Once Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection could no longer be doubted (even by Thomas), there remained only one possible conclusion to draw: God's future had broken into their present! If resurrection is part of God's future, and Jesus is in fact risen, then God's future was here. The disciples may not have always been quick studies, but even they could follow that logic. There may still be plenty of work for God to do, but there could be no doubt that work had started. And who could doubt it? After all, He is risen!

Jesus' resurrection is God's future in our present, proof that our hope is not in vain. We know that God's great and beautiful future is not just a pipe dream because it is no longer just in the future, it has broken into our present as well. We know God can and will do what He has promised because He is already doing what He has promised. And we know that one day we too will be raised from dead. As Paul might ask, How could we doubt it—Jesus is risen!

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