



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
5150 CHICAGO AVE S.
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55417

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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

AUGUST 2021

Status & Identity BY JAY POUND

A couple of years ago, a new guy showed up at Men United on Friday morning. He was 20, and in college, and had found our group online. He made the shocking decision (for a college student) to show up at 6:30 a.m. and check it out. Afterward, I introduced myself to him, and asked what had motivated him to come. He responded that he wanted to get to know some older Christian men who would be able to advise and mentor him in the next stages of life.

I was excited; this is exactly what Men United was designed for. But as I looked around, I realized a few of our older guys weren't there that morning, but I told him, don't worry, they will likely be here next week. This was met with an uncomfortable silence, and with hysterical laughter from my friend Seth who had also joined the conversation. Once he stopped laughing, Seth (who is my age), looked at me and said, "When he said 'older guys,' he was talking about us.

And he was right! Somehow, without my noticing, I had become one of the "older guys" (at least to college students). I had been married for over a decade, was working in my chosen field, and had 2 children who were both in school. This 20 year old looked at me and saw his

own - distant - future. What had created the confusion and humor was that when I looked at him, part of me still thought I was his age.

One way to think about this situation is as a disconnect between status (how others see you) and identity (how you see yourself).^{*} Status is something that is either given or earned, and influences what others expect of us. For example: "She is a hard working employee," or "He is my best friend." Identity, by contrast, is something we construct; it is the way we see or think of ourselves (e.g. as a member of a profession, family or the people of God). Our identity dictates what we care about, what we want and what we do.

One of the central gifts of the gospel, and covenant with God more generally, is that we are given by God a new status. When we give our allegiance to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we gain a new status as His People, specifically the people of the Messiah. God writes his name on us. When God sees us, and when others see us, they should think, "There goes one who belongs to Jesus." And that status comes with many benefits, but also with new expectations - people are going to expect certain things when they see the name of Jesus. And they should.

Part of the task of the Christian life is to rebuild our own identity around the new status we have been given through Jesus. And while others can and should help, some of it we simply must do for ourselves. It takes time, intention, reflection and work. We will have to root out or let go of views of ourselves that are not consistent with our new status. We need to humbly accept correction and encouragement from others (especially our brothers and sisters), when they see old status and identities peeking through. And we need to be immersed in God's word so that we can understand better how God sees us, and let that transform how we see ourselves.

1 John 3.1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" God in his great love and mercy has called us his children. And that is no convenient fiction, in Christ God has made that reality! Our job is to believe it; to see ourselves as God sees us, and then to live out of that new identity, to let it dictate what we care about, what we want and what we do.

^{*}Credit to John Walton, in *Old Testament theology for Christians, for this framework.*

Women's Neighborhood Bible Study

We are excited to return to our traditional in person Wednesday morning meetings this fall, while keeping in place an on-line Zoom option.

The Twelve Disciples is a ten week study that begins the week of 9/15, with breaks during MEA and Thanksgiving, and concludes the week of 12/15.

Jesus had about three years to mold a dozen fearful, faithless men into the pillars of a worldwide movement. Despite this brief window, time in Jesus' presence had a transforming effect on each of them, and they would be changed by Jesus' power. Join us and see how this study will transform you too!

Look for more information on how to register for the Fall study coming in mid-August!

Winter Study begins Jan 5, 2022:

Anxiety - Finding Comfort & Reassurance from God

Spring Study begins March 2, 2022:

Phillipians - Jesus our Joy

Women's Neighborhood Bible Study

Fall Study:
The 12 Disciples

Winter Study:
Anxiety - Finding Comfort &
Reassurance from God

Spring Study:
Phillipians - Jesus our Joy

HAS YOUR INFORMATION CHANGED?

Please update the church office if your phone number, email or home address has changed recently

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

WANT MORE INFO?

Web: www.firstfreechurch.org
 facebook.com/firstfreechurch
 Instagram: @firstfreechurchmpls
 Twitter: @FEFCMpls

FIRST FREE STAFF

JOEL SUTTON
SENIOR PASTOR
joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org

JAY POUND
ASSOCIATE PASTOR
jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org

PAUL ANLEITNER
WORSHIP PASTOR
paul.anleitner@firstfreechurch.org

JASON PENSA
STUDENT PASTOR
jason.pensa@firstfreechurch.org

CARRIE BOYUM
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR
carrie.boyum@firstfreechurch.org

STACEY URBANZ
NURSERY DIRECTOR
stacey.urbanz@firstfreechurch.org

**MAUREEN JUAREZ &
JEANINE BRUEN**
FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES
nurses@firstfreechurch.org

SARAH OLSON
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
sarah.olson@firstfreechurch.org

JOANN BURNS
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
joann.burns@firstfreechurch.org

DAN FERGUS
TECH DIRECTOR/COMMUNICATIONS
dan.fergus@firstfreechurch.org

SCOTT BECKETT
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN
scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org

JODI WIKEN
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR
jodi.wiken@firstfreechurch.org



SEE MORE INFO AT:
www.firstfreechurch.org

Reverberating Jesus this Summer

by Jason Pensa

This summer, our Church had the opportunity to host youth groups from outside of Minnesota to come and learn about how they could be the hands and feet of Jesus to the lost, the lonely and left out. It was such a great opportunity for our church to be able to participate alongside the ReachYouth arm of EFCA to be able to host APEX Missions Trip teams.



Apex is working to build an environment where young people are inspired to give their best to building the kingdom of God right now. They are hoping to raise a generation of servant leaders who want to introduce their peers to Jesus--which sparks on the mission field but actually begins once they get back home. So while in the Twin Cities these teams got the opportunity to serve alongside local ministries such as Union Gospel Mission, Breakthrough and Community Emergency Services.

We also got to bring some of our Student Ministry Team members along with some Ministry Team hopefuls to an event called REVERB. Students had the opportunity to learn about how they might REMAIN in their relationship with God as it's only His love that motivates or sustains us to do anything of value for the Kingdom! Then we got to learn how to RELATE to one another and CARE for one another. Then we talked about how to RECLAIM the lost by being sure to share the good news of Jesus with those God has put into our lives and to REPEAT all these things with our friends and family back home.



The opportunity to worship with other youth groups and talk about how we can encourage each other and practice sharing the gospel on the streets of Lake Geneva, WI were all solid outworkings of this amazing conference.



VBC 2021

Thank you to everyone who participated in VBC this year! Especially our volunteers!
We had 124 kids and 75 volunteers.



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firstfreetv on YouTube

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If you are not receiving our weekly email updates from Pastor Jay, please email the church office at office@firstfreechurch.org

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Congratulations to Gabrielle and David Hauge on the birth of their son Samson Daniel Hauge!