



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 2022

What Must I Do? BY JAY POUND

One overcast and humid Fall evening, I walked off the soccer field frustrated and angry. We had lost (again) to a team that had shown very little respect or sportsmanship. Many of them had been rude, some had played dirty - and they had won. I was frustrated with the ref, frustrated with the result and frustrated with God for seeming to reward - or at least for failing to punish - a team that so clearly deserved to lose. I walked toward the sideline with every intention of skipping the post game ritual wherein the two teams would line up and then give each other "low fives" while repeating, "Good game."

My parents, sensing my intention, intervened. I knew what was coming, so I made my case first. This team didn't deserve it! My parents had seen how they played, heard how they talked. They had not played a good game, I insisted, and I would not pretend they had!

My parents, in their great wisdom, took issue with none of this. Instead they suggested that I had misunderstood something central about sportsmanship. Sportsmanship, they told me, was not about the other team, it was about me. The question was not whether the other team deserved it; everyone is a good sport when the other team earns their respect. The question is was I a good sport? Was I the kind of person

who responded to disappointment and frustration with dignity, or the kind of person who responded with a tantrum? I groaned, then I jogged over to get in line. I knew who I wanted to be.

One of the repeated patterns of the gospels, especially among the parables, is that someone will come to Jesus and ask, "What must I do?" "What must I do to gain eternal life," or "How many times must I forgive my brother," or "Who is my neighbor?" In other words, people come to Jesus with questions about behavior, about finer points of law, about where exactly the boundary is between obedience and disobedience. They want Jesus to draw a line. They want to be told that if they refuse forgiveness after the 8th offense that it isn't a sin, and that God of course never intended for them to see Samaritans as their neighbors.

But time after time, Jesus disappoints them. Time and again, Jesus is asked a question about what to do, and responds with a story about who we are. Asked "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with a story about a man who goes to great lengths to help a stranger. Asked to draw a clear line between neighbors and not-neighbors, Jesus challenges all who hear his parable to be a neighbor. Like my parents, Jesus tells his interlocutor to worry less about what others "deserve" and more about what kind of person he

wants to be. Is he a neighbor? Are we?

When Peter asks, "How many times must I forgive my brother?" Jesus similarly takes the focus off of the hypothetical "other" and puts it squarely on Peter. The question, Jesus says, is not how often the other has sinned against you, the real question is has Peter received - and been transformed by - the limitless forgiveness of God? One who has been forgiven so much, Jesus suggests, will surely forgive others, even when it is costly, because to receive God's forgiveness is to be transformed by it. Therefore the most important question is, has Peter received God's forgiveness or not? Have we received it?

My hope for all of us as we conclude our Summer series on the parables is that we will let Jesus rewrite our identity through his powerful stories, that we will leave thinking not just about "what must I do," but about who we are. Are we neighbors to those in need? Are we people who so fully laid hold of God's great forgiveness that it has transformed us? Are we gracious, humble and joyful, as befits those who have received a gift of all surpassing worth that we do not deserve and did not earn? May God continue to use these stories to make us more like the people he has called us to be.



Welcome!

We want to welcome onto our staff and into new roles:

- Middle School Director: Doug Nelson
- Worship Ministry Associate: Emma Delisi
- Children's Ministry Associate: Stacey Urbanz

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

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 PENZA
STUDENT PASTOR
jason.penza@firstfreechurch.org

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

STACEY URBANZ
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ASSOCIATE
stacey.urbanz@firstfreechurch.org

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

SCOTT BECKETT
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN
scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org

JOANN BURNS
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
joann.burns@firstfreechurch.org

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

SARAH OLSON
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
sarah.olson@firstfreechurch.org

EMMA DELISI
WORSHIP ASSOCIATE
emma.burns@firstfreechurch.org

DOUG NELSON
MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR
doug.nelson@firstfreechurch.org

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HITTING THE BRICKS

The church building recently had some construction done, here are more details from former Finance and Property's Charles Sawyer.

Over the life of our church building, its exterior has been assailed by Minnesota's weather extremes. Prolonged water infiltration had caused efflorescence (a bloom of water soluble salts) as well as deteriorated and spalled brick. This allowed moisture into the wall system causing damage to the surrounding masonry through the freeze and thaw cycle—the most evident damage being on the south façade of the building, the result of failed flashing under the ridge stone caps. Similar repairs were also needed on the eastside of the building.

In May, Building Restoration Corporation, a Roseville company, was contracted to make the necessary repairs for a sum of \$70,794. The project was completed over a two week period. On the south end, with the stone caps removed, metal flashing over-topped with a rubber membrane was installed. Weep ropes were then applied to shed moisture. The existing stone caps were then replaced and cleaned. On the east side there was a chemical cleaning of main entryway stonework along with removal and replacement of existing stone head joints. Deteriorated sealant joints were cut out and replaced with fresh sealant to help protect the stone from the moisture freeze thaw cycle. On both the south and east sides, deteriorated, spalled and cracked bricks were replaced and mortar joints were repointed.

There is nothing that can be done about Minnesota's weather extremes, but we can always do something about its effect on our building.



MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION TRIP



This July, The Velocity Middle School joined with Youthworks in Duluth for a week of service to that community. Students had a variety of projects to take part in, along with evening activities and worship times. We went with the mentality of doing our part in the vision God has called us to at a given time. We used analogies and applications from completing a jigsaw puzzle to see a clear perspective of where we "fit" within God's big picture.

Staff from Youthworks presented the theme of living out a Christ like authentic love. Our group was able to plant just under 1,200 trees in a reservation, do yard work at nursing facilities and for nearby elderly homeowners, as well as needed tasks at the Union Gospel Mission. It was evident that the Holy Spirit was teaching and empowering students and leaders by the love and enthusiasm seen. Recipients were grateful and impressed with the attitudes and hard work done by the students with every project they took part in. Praise God for His grace and a great time in the city of Duluth! (*more photos on the back*)

MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT

for more information about missionaries First Free supports, visit: firstfreechurch.org/mission

Nubako Selenga

ReachAfrica in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

In a city of over 17 million people, ReachGlobal Kinshasa City Team serves to strengthen and revitalize the ministry of the local church and to see new churches planted through gospel initiatives, which give churches real ways to reach those around them. The City Team Leader provides oversight to the Kinshasa City Ministry team and the ongoing development of the ministry by monitoring needs, exploring opportunities, and developing strategic partnerships throughout the city.

Favorite Food: I love to eat fish with rice or banana and pizza

Favorite Family

Game: We love card games

A way I've seen God use me in the last year:

In discipleship and coaching others



Grace Stoelzing

Campus Ventures, Laramie, WY

Campus Ventures (CV) is a campus ministry in Laramie, WY that focuses on reaching lost college students with the gospel. CV's mission statement is to help college students glorify God through knowing and loving Him and leading others to be devoted disciple-makers for Jesus Christ. I just love the 'disciple MAKERS' part of this mission statement- CV doesn't just want to raise up disciples but raise up disciples that make disciples, through that multiplication is how we will reach the most students! College will either make or break a student's faith so I just see the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission on the college campus- college is where I really found my faith for myself so I am just so excited and honored to do ministry for my full-time job.

Favorite food: Watermelon

Favorite family game: Mexican trains or Ticket to Ride

A way I've seen God use me in the last year: Kelly was a freshman this past semester whom I got to know and disciple for about a month before she left for the summer. She wasn't having the best freshman year and was just feeling super lonely and told me she wanted to transfer when we first hung out. I was desiring to disciple someone in Laramie but because of my recent move I didn't really know anyone but decided to take Kelly under my wing! We went on to workout at 6am together 4x a week and meet for discipleship once a week, this constant state of being together just transformed our relationship into a sweet friendship! As I was saying bye to her for the summer, she started to cry and went on to tell me that because of me she didn't want to transfer anymore and that I made her semester so much better. It was just so sweet to see how the Lord used me in Kelly's life to just show His love to her and help the semester get better! The Lord also used Kelly in my life to just encourage me in discipleship and challenge me with what we talked about. He is so good and so sweet in His ways!



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Congratulations to the Lawrence family on the birth of their son, Maverick Lawrence!
- Congratulations to the Vatsaas family on the birth of their daughter, Freya Joy Vatsaas!
- Our condolences to the family of Carolyn Berg who passed away at the age of 83.