



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

DECEMBER 2022

Story of Christmas BY JOEL SUTTON

The Christmas story did not begin with the birth of Jesus in that little manger, in Bethlehem. It begins much earlier. It begins much higher. It begins in the heavens, where God lives and reigns.

The story of Christ's coming, begins as God looks at a sinful people whom he created and whom he loved. He sees that they are lost and helpless. And he says, "I must get this fixed. They can't fix it alone."

In the very beginning, after the fall of mankind, God says to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15). That was God's promise. He was going to send someone to rescue us, someone to defeat evil and build a bridge back to God.

Throughout the Old Testament, the story of Christmas continues. God repeats the promise and reveals more and more about the One he is going to

send - about what he will be like, where he will be born and what he will do. 450 prophecies - give or take a few - about the coming of the Messiah.

And when the time was right, God sent Jesus, God in flesh and bone. Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

On Christmas we are celebrating the anniversary of the arrival of the Rescuer, our one and only Savior.

This was no last second thought. God knew all along when the right time would be to send Jesus to you and me. The events moving towards the birth of Christ were like the gears of a fine old Swiss watch-some were large, others small, but each one was connected to another, and they all had to mesh

perfectly for the hands of God's clock to point to Bethlehem at the hour of Christ's birth.

And the Christmas story continued. From the birth of Jesus, to the three years of his public ministry on earth, to his entrance into Jerusalem at the time of Passover to his death on the cross as the true and ultimate sacrifice for sin. That is the main event of the Christmas story. Not Jesus' birth, but Jesus' death. Jesus was born to die.

On Christmas we are celebrating the anniversary of the arrival of the Rescuer, our one and only Savior.

This Christmas, I want to invite you to allow the story which began long time ago, before time, to change your life. Allow the story of his love, his grace, his sacrifice to change how you see Christmas. And then invite a friend to hear this story once again at one of our Christmas services.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALL FOR ART

This December we are once again inviting artists of all skill levels and ages to submit photos, paintings, drawings, graphic designs, or other expressions of art to be shared with our church community in our 5th annual Advent and Christmas art exhibit. Pieces can be dropped off at the church office during the week. For more information, contact Worship Pastor Paul Anleitner (paul.anleitner@firstfreechurch.org)

CHRISTMAS ORCHESTRA

The first rehearsal for the Christmas multi-generational orchestra will be next week, December 4—after the second service. If you have not participated before and are interested in joining, contact Cheryl Polland at jpolland@usfamily.net

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Saturday, December 24 at 2 & 3:30 p.m.

Join us in celebrating God's coming to earth and dwelling among us, at our annual Christmas Eve worship services on December 24th at 2:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. There will be no nursery or childcare; families are encouraged to worship together.

CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY WORSHIP

This Christmas morning, we invite you and your family to worship Christ together! We will have available online (www.firstfreechurch.org) a brief worship service with Christmas carols, Scripture reading and a short Christmas devotional.

In the midst of the giving and receiving gifts and the big Christmas dinner, take some time and worship the One who came as our Savior and Lord!



ADVENT SERIES

- | | |
|---------|---------------------|
| Nov. 27 | A Story of Promise |
| Dec. 4 | A Story of Darkness |
| Dec. 11 | A Story of Love |
| Dec. 18 | A Story of War |
| Dec. 24 | A Jesus Story |



Merry Christmas from the First Free Staff!

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

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VISIT US ONLINE

www.firstfreechurch.org



SOCIAL MEDIA

youtube.com/firstfreetv

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Thank you Mary!

After a 19 year commitment to serving in the nursery at First Free, Mary Bostrom is stepping back from her Coordinator duties. In the Coordinator role, Mary was a friendly and familiar face greeting the infants and toddlers each Sunday. She developed special relationships with each child, showing the love of Jesus while building block towers or soothing away tears.



Mary has impacted and blessed so many families in our church over the years. She enjoyed continuing her relationships with kids as they grew up in the church, and always checked in with them as they passed in the hallways. Her calm and steady presence will be missed in the nursery, but we wish her many blessings in her future pursuits. Thank you Mary!



Missionaries of the Month

Guy and Barb Hugo

Our ministry roots started in 2000 when Barb was invited on a missions trip to a First Nations community in NW Ontario, Canada. Over the years we have continued going to remote communities in NW Ontario as well as to Thunder Bay, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and through fellowship/friendship evangelism established relationships and found favor within the communities. Many have crossed the border to visit us and for ministry. We've become trusted by many and are able to spend time in prayer and pastoral care which increased with covid restricting our travel. Ministry has been mainly by phone, texting and Facebook. Our journey from a few beginning mission trips developed into ministry of prayer, pastoral care for those in grief and trauma, hospitality and conducting funerals.



This past year we have been to Lac Courte Oreilles, WI and Rosebud, SD and stayed connected with some local Native Ministries. There has been an increase in our opportunities to pray for our friends and bring comfort and encouragement through God's Word to many who have suffered the loss of loved ones. It has been our privilege to serve the Lord.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Our condolences to the family of Violet Clinton who passed away at the age of 88.
- Congratulations to Nathan and Bekah Waller on the birth of their son Grant Timothy Waller!
- Baby Dedications: Archer Peters and Maverick Lawrence

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

- Ryan & Beth Boniwell
- Chad Danielson
- Sam & Amanda Goertz
- David & Gabrielle Hauge
- Tamar Nelson
- Caleb Ogren
- Nathan & Bekah Waller
- Jon & Petra Fager

Serving in the Czech by Lenka Bragg

During Outreach Weekend a few years ago, I attended a presentation by a missionary serving in Eastern Berlin. As she talked about the spiritual state of the people there, I thought about my own family and friends in the Czech Republic because it reminded me of their unbelief, skepticism, aversion to ideology, and difficulty to find faith. As she described details, I was so grieved by their ignorance of God that I cried the rest of the class session. This is when I realized that God laid a burden on my heart for the country I left as an unbeliever 30 years ago and I began praying for opportunities to be a witness to my friends and family.



July 2022 English Camp, Orlicke mountains, Czech Republic



I am happy to share that God answered my prayer through the ministry of short term English camps. These camps support local Czech churches by offering a quality experience of learning and speaking English for a full week. Churches throughout the U.S. are invited to send volunteers to go and serve at the camps, prepare English curriculum, and perform other functions under the direction of the Czech host churches. English camps not only help Czechs begin a spiritual journey and come into relationship with their Creator,

but also invite them into connection with a local church body.

This past summer was the second time that I got to participate in this powerful ministry. Both times I was encouraged by the faith and commitment of the Czech believers, missionaries, short-term workers, and U.S. nationals. Together, we spent months preparing and praying that God would use us for the work of evangelism and that God's love would be evident through our interactions. During the week-long camp, we hoped to make connections, have conversations, laugh a lot, maybe cry a bit, worship in God's presence, bond over outdoor and indoor games, and hear powerful testimonies of how God is working in people's lives. When the camp's week came and ended, everything that we hoped and prayed for happened and it was absolutely wonderful. However, the most powerful thing I experienced came from the love and faithfulness of God's people to us. My daughters and I were blessed through the prayers and support of our First Free church family who also financed five Ukrainian refugees to come with us to camp. We got to see firsthand the impact such love had on our new Ukrainian friends as they haven't had many enjoyable moments since fleeing their home country. While there could have been language and cultural barriers, the love and acceptance of the believers at camp was personally evident to us through the joy, relaxation, playfulness and connections with the community that we established during our weeklong stay there.

The ministry to the Czech people is not an easy one because Czech Republic is one of the most atheistic nations in Europe, but God's work is evident in the English camp ministry and I am grateful for being able to experience it with my daughters.

Thank you Scott!

We have a large campus here at First Free. Not only do we have an older building that is big, busy, but we also have two parking lots, sidewalks and the three houses across the street. All of this needs constant care, maintenance, and cleaning.

Twenty years ago, on December 2, 2002, we hired Scott Beckett as our church custodian/facilities manager.

What I love about Scott is that he has from day one seen his job as a ministry. When he repairs a hole in a wall, he connects it back to helping people become Christ-Centered and Christ-Sent. When he repairs a sink in the kitchen, he does it for the Glory of God. When he clears the snow up to the curb and off the sidewalks, he does it with a desire to minister to us, his church family.

Thank you Scott for your faithful and invaluable ministry to our church family these past 20 years!



New Sunday Schedule

Starting Sunday, January 8th, we will be switching to a new Sunday schedule.

- Community hour from 9:00-10:00
- Fellowship half-hour from 10:00-10:30
- Worship hour from 10:30-11:30

All of our adult groups will meet together during the 9:00 Community hour, along with Creekside and Velocity. Children's Church will continue as usual during the 10:30 Worship hour. This new schedule will allow our whole congregation to worship together in the same service, and will make it easier for us to help people find and join a Community Group. This format will also provide our staff more opportunities to be involved in different ways on a given Sunday morning. We are excited for this new schedule and for the new options and opportunities it will provide.