



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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A Savior for All BY JOEL SUTTON

In his book, *Detours: Sometimes Rough Roads Lead to Right Places*, Clark Cothorn tells of a Christmas when his family encountered an unexpected house guest. A squirrel had fallen down their chimney into the wood burner stove in the basement of their Michigan home.

Cothorn writes: "I thought if it knew we were there to help, I could just reach in and gently lift it out. Nothing doing. As I reached in...it began scratching about like a squirrel overdosed on espresso."

We finally managed to construct a cardboard box "cage" complete with a large hole cut into one side, into which the squirrel waltzed when we placed the box against the wood burner's door. We let it out into the safety of our backyard.

Later, I thought, "Isn't it funny how, before its redemption, our little visitor had frantically tried to bash its way out of its dark prison? It seemed that the harder it struggled in its own strength to get free, the more pain it caused itself."

In the end, he simply had to wait patiently until one who was much bigger—one who could peer into his world—could carry him safely to that larger world

where he really belonged.

That is what we need the Lord to do for us."

This Christmas season we are celebrating the reality that Jesus, the One who is much bigger than us, has come and freed us from our dark prison.

He has come as the Savior for all.

In the apostle Paul's letter to his young mentee, Timothy, he writes, "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put hope in the living God, who is the *Savior of all men*, and especially of those who believe." (1 Timothy 4:9-10, italic added).

Paul is not arguing for universalism, the idea that every person will be saved, but rather, that God is the Savior of all in that he offers salvation to all and saves those who receive his gift.

In one of the most famous verses of the Bible, John 3:16, Jesus announces this same good news of the Bible - God is the Savior of all. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not

perish but have eternal life."

Three simple, yet profound truths in this verse. First, God loves the people of the world. When Jesus said "world" he wasn't talking about the planet earth. He meant all people.

When Jesus said, "God so loved the world" he meant God loves people who don't love him back, people who avoid him and ignore him. People who don't care about him or his commands. God loves people who stay home on Sunday morning instead of going to church because they prefer to read the Sunday morning newspaper instead of the Bible. God loves these people, these irreligious people, these un-believing people. In other words, God loves all of "us".

The second amazing truth is that God expressed his love to the world on Christmas morning, by giving his only Son. God didn't love us in words alone. The most important demonstration of God's love for sinners is Jesus, given to us on that first Christmas, given to us on the cross.

(Continued inside)

Community Emergency Services Drive



Thank you to everyone who donated to our Community Emergency Services food drive!

Together we collected 1128 lbs of food and hygiene products!

UPCOMING SERIES | A SAVIOR FOR ALL



- DEC. 3 He came for our enemies Matt. 8:5-13
- DEC. 10 He came for the disappointed and disgraced Luke 1:5-25
- DEC. 17 He came for good and humble people Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38
- DEC. 24 For those who seek Matt. 2:1-12

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

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MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM OUR STAFF!



Staff from Left to Right

Back Row: Jason Pensa, Paul Anleitner, Dan Fergus, Scott Beckett

Middle Row: Sarah Olson, Emma Burns, Jay Pound, JoAnn Burns, Joel Sutton, Doug Nelson

Front Row: Carrie Boyum, Stacey Urbanz, Jeanine Bruen, Allie Danielson

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Happy Birthday to Margaret Jensen who celebrated her 100th birthday last month!
- Congratulations to Lindsay and Carey Robinson on the birth of their son Keller Jordan Robinson!
- Our condolences to the family of Dorothy Young who passed away at the age of 90.

(Continued from front)

Giving Jesus to the world wasn't like rescuing a crazy squirrel. Instead, it was like rescuing the person you dislike most in the world by allowing the person you love the most in the world to be beaten up, mocked, spit upon and then nailed to a wooden cross until they died. It was an act of radical, unthinkable love.

Two amazing truths. God loves the world. And God demonstrated that love by giving his Son Jesus to us at Christmas so that He would die on the cross for our sake. So does this incredible love mean you can go on with your life without any care and when you die you will automatically go to heaven? No. John 3:16 says that something is expected of you and me and all people. We must respond to God's love. This the third amazing truth.

"Whoever believes in him." It is crucial to note what this does not say. John

3:16 does not say, "Whoever obeys all the commands and laws of the Bible shall not perish, but have eternal life." It says, "Whoever believes in him," that is, in Jesus. It doesn't say, "Whoever does good works, donates to charity, reads the Bible, says their prayers every day, and goes to church every week shall not perish but have eternal life." It says, "Whoever believes in him." It doesn't say, "Be good enough so that you deserve God's approval." It says believe in Jesus Christ.

Jesus has come as the Savior for all. He has come for our enemies. He has come for the discouraged and the disgraced. He has come for the good and the humble. He has come for sinners - like us. He has come to carry us safely to that larger world where we really belong.

UPCOMING EVENTS



The Advent Festival returns this year on Saturday, **December 2 from 10-12 noon** at First Free. Join us at this Creekside family event and begin the Advent season celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus. We'll have cookie decorating, Christmas bingo, wreath making, simmer spice assembly, a manger scene photo op, a church-wide scavenger hunt, hot cocoa, and snacks!



Join us in celebrating God's coming to earth and dwelling among us, at our annual Christmas Eve worship services on **December 24th at 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.**

There will be no nursery or childcare; families are encouraged to worship together.

ONGOING AFFINITY GROUPS



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. Put another way, we want to help men live Christ centered and Christ sent together.

Men United meets at the church on **Fridays from 6:30-7:30 a.m.**



MOPS is a place to make new friends, discover a wealth of helpful hints and smarter strategies when dealing with the challenges of motherhood. Our program offers a morning of food, fun, creative activities, guest speakers on relevant topics such as parenting, relationships, marriage, and more! Plus, attending children are cared for at MOPS KIDS, our biblically based children's program! **Every first and third Friday at 9:30 a.m.**

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