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FIRST WORD

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Summer with Velocity

Written by Jake Weikel, Student Pastor

Summer is a time where a lot of the routines and regularity for our church are changed, and Velocity is no different. During the summer months many of our students are busy traveling on vacations or with various sports teams, and many others spend the summer working at or attending a variety of camps. Because of this, our programming takes a significant step back during the summer months, allowing the summer to be relaxed and be more focused on fun hangouts rather than organized routines.

The summer trips are no doubt the biggest events of the summer for Velocity. Both the middle and high school each do a summer trip that varies year to year. This year the high school partnered with Forest Springs for a week-long adventure trip that featured canoeing, kayaking, and camping. Jess McWilliams helped me bring sixteen students along, and Forest Springs provided three trip guides who were a great help and a lot of fun! Over the course of the trip, the students had a blast and really got to know each other better. Our devotional series for the week covered the importance of being refreshed by God's Word in order that we might live as renewed people, something that we were able to practice well while being disconnected from daily distractions.

The middle school trip had to call a late "audible" due to the wildfires and head to Wilderness Fellowship in Wisconsin despite originally planning to be up north in the Boundary Waters with Rock Ridge. Doug and Tamar Nelson did a fantastic job to make sure that the pivot worked and the students all had a blast. We did some tubing, some canoeing, enjoyed time at the lake, and potentially (re?)discovered nuke 'em as a group favorite game. During the week, we explored the idea of "calling;" discussing what a calling looks like, and what we are called to as believers.

There were a handful of fun events that were sprinkled throughout the summer as well. Our annual bike ride to Dairy Queen had its highest participation since I've been here, and a group of just over twenty students enjoyed our picnic that happened after the Tuesday of VBC. Now in recent weeks, it has been fun to see students back on Sundays, and our recent kickball event gave me the impression that they are looking forward to the start of the new year. I'm excited for what the year has in store–bring on the school year!





Visit **firstfreechurch.org** for information on events, community groups, ministries, service opportunities, the sermon series, & more.

Creekside Summer Recap

Written by Carrie Boyum, Children's Ministry Director



VACATION BIBLE CAMP

We had a fantastic week of Vacation Bible Camp (VBC), June 15-19, 2026 as we explored Rainforest Falls and the incredible nature of God! We had 150 registered campers and 108 volunteers to help make this an impactful week as we learned how awesome God is.

Every day we had a theme and a Bible Point that the day revolved around. During the week we learned:

God is our creator.

God knows everything.

God is our safe place.

God is love.

God is forever.

Kids moved around to stations throughout the church, getting the opportunity to learn about the nature of God by making crafts, playing games, hearing and interacting with Bible stories, memorizing scripture, and having Rainforest Falls-themed snacks. Songs, skits, and experiments helped kids learn about God while having lots of fun. The church was decorated and transformed into a beautiful rainforest, helping kids feel immersed into the theme. Kids had the daily opportunity to write out their God sightings on flowers and leaves and add them to the God sightings wall outside of the gym. Our mission project this year was to raise money to help build a sports court in the Dominican Republic, a country that has many rainforests. We partnered with Rick and Becky Mackey, First Free supported missionaries. The campers and volunteers together raised **$3000** to go towards the sports court.

I loved seeing kids from First Free and our community learn about God and discover the incredible nature of God.

KIDS IN THE SERVICE

During the school year and through June, elementary kids are dismissed prior to the sermon in the worship service. We head downstairs to two classes, where we have fun, sing songs, discover a Bible story, do a craft, and learn more about God together. However, during the months of July, August, and until the Sunday after Labor Day, our elementary kids are part of the entire worship service. Having the kids part of the service gives them the opportunity to experience what the whole service is like. Since we're a multi-generational church, having some of the youngest kids in the service allows them to learn from older generations and for the older generations; to teach and rub shoulders with the kids.

During greeting time, I'd encourage you to seek out the kids sitting around you. Welcome them to the service. Maybe ask their names and school grades. Let them know that you're glad to see them in church. Having our kids feel like they are an important part of the church increases the likelihood that they will continue to love God, love church, and be active members as they grow up.











UPCOMING CREEKSIDE & VELOCITY EVENTS

Learn more at firstfreechurch.org/events

- **Christian Sexuality: Raising Kids (A Parenting Series)** — Every Sunday starting September 20, 2026, 5:45–7:30 P.M.
- **Camp Nathanael Father-Son Weekend** — October 2–4, 2026
- **Fall Fling** — November 6–8, 2026 @ Camp Shamineau