



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

Want to receive First Word  
via email? Contact the office  
at [info@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:info@firstfreechurch.org)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TWIN CITIES MN  
PERMIT NO 32622

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2023

## Story of the Big Hole BY JOEL SUTTON

There is in Kimberly, South Africa a "Big Hole". It is said to be the deepest man-made hole in the world. Dug with primitive tools, this "Big Hole" has a surface of 42 acres, is 1519 feet wide, and has been excavated to a depth of 790 feet. Before it was a hole, it used to be a hill. People suffered famine, murder, and thievery to come from all over the world to dig.

Why would people come from all over the world to a place like Kimberly to turn a hill into the biggest man-made hole in the world?

Because, as the story is told, one day some little boys were playing on the hill, throwing pebbles at each other. A gentlemen walking past noticed the sun glint off one of the pebbles. Immediately, he recognized it as a diamond. Within one year there were 50,000 people camped around that hill digging for diamonds.

I guess that's how you get people to come from all over the world with primitive implements to turn a hill into the biggest man-made hole in the world! It's called motivation.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul describes his motivation to share the gospel this way, "For Christ's love compels us." The apostle's understanding of the love of Christ became a dramatic, powerful motivation.

If one of my kids were in a burning building, I wouldn't care how big the flames were - I'd go in after them. I wouldn't care if I got hurt. I wouldn't care if other people said I was crazy. I'd still go in! I'd grab my child and bring her out. Then people would say, "You were brave!" No, I wasn't brave or courageous or crazy. I was motivated by love.

Everybody matters to God. God has never made a person that He didn't love. God made some people that I might not like. Others that might be difficult for me to love. But God loves them. The most despicable person you can imagine is still loved by God. And because God cares, we must care.

If I love my neighbor, my friend, my classmate, I would want to tell them the Good News. It's not like we're trying to give them cancer! It's not like we're trying to sell them swampland in Florida or get them involved in some Ponzi-scheme. We're telling them the greatest news in the world - about forgiveness of the past, power and purpose in the present, and a home in heaven in the future. They can't get that deal anywhere else.

Maybe you are wondering, "But, how do I do that? How do I share my faith?" You do it two ways: you've got to show it and share it.

Remember "show and tell" from your school days? That's what God wants

us to do. He wants us to help others visualize it with our lives and verbalize it with our mouths.

On Sunday, February 26, we will be focusing on outreach and missions. Inside this edition of FIRST WORD you can read about who is speaking and the schedule for that Sunday morning. Terre Webster from Damascus Way will be sharing about his ministry. Carl Nelson, from Transform MN, will be preaching and sharing about how they work with churches around the state to help them reach people with the gospel.

These are two organizations that are in our backyard and I want to encourage you to take advantage of them being with us. Get to know them. Get to know their ministries. Learn how you might support and pray for them.

Few of us will have the Apostle Paul's gifts, none of us will have his opportunities, but all of us have the same message he received and the same powerful motivation.

God has called us to do missions. Might his love compel us to reach our neighbors, our city and those around the world with His Gospel.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### EXPRESSIONS SUPPORT GROUP

Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m.

The Expressions support group is similar to other small groups at First Free. It is a place where people "do life" together: supporting and encouraging each other, praying for each other, serving, and seeking biblical wisdom together. However, membership in this group is dedicated to people dealing with chronic illnesses ranging from ongoing diseases to mental illness, such as chronic depression and anxiety.

Expressions generally meets twice monthly on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m. All art materials are provided, and there is no cost to attend. Upcoming gatherings are 2/12 and 2/26. If interested, please contact one of the Faith Community Nurses ([nurses@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:nurses@firstfreechurch.org)).

### QUARTERLY CELEBRATION

Monday, February 20th 7:00 p.m.

Our Quarterly Celebration (business meeting) will be held on Monday, February 20 via Zoom. The Zoom link will be published in the Friday, February 17 email (or you can contact the church office during business hours).

### RETREAT 46

April 21st - 23rd

Retreat46 at Camp Shamineau is a weekend retreat for kids in grades 4-5. It's a great time for kids to spend the weekend doing lots of fun activities, bonding with other kids from First Free, and hearing great messages about God. Kids are welcome to invite friends to go along! Cost is \$115.

Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?

Contact the office at [info@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:info@firstfreechurch.org)

**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.pensa@firstfreechurch.org

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

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

**JEANINE BRUEN & ALLIE DANIELSON**  
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

**VISIT US ONLINE**

www.firstfreechurch.org



**SOCIAL MEDIA**

youtube.com/firstfreetv

facebook.com/firstfreechurch

instagram.com/firstfreechurchmpls

*Outreach Sunday*

**Sunday, February 26th**  
**9:00 a.m. Community Hour & 10:30 a.m. Worship Service**

**Keynote Speaker: Carl Nelson, President of Transform Minnesota**

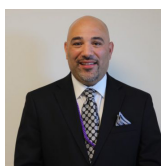
Transform Minnesota is a regional evangelical network where church leaders engage complex issues from a Biblical perspective. Carl began working at Transform Minnesota in 1997 and was the Executive Director of their refugee resettlement program, Arrive Ministries, for seven years.



In 2005 he was appointed President of Transform Minnesota. He serves on the Executive Committee of the National Association of Evangelicals, and on the Parent Council of Maranatha Christian Academy.

**Community Hour: Tierre Webster, Executive Director, Damascus Way**

Tierre Webster is an ordained pastor in the Church of God in Christ. He also is a Licensed Graduate Social Worker who has spent over 20 years ministering in an urban context. His experience has allowed him to serve as an executive director, a local pastor and as the Chief Operating Officer of a mission in Puerto Rico. He is humbled to be leading Damascus Way Reentry Center in this exciting season.



**TERRACE ON CHICAGO | MARCH 4TH, 2023**

For over a decade, our Student Ministries at First Free Church have hosted a sit-down meal fundraiser called Terrace on Chicago. This event has historically been the only fundraiser our youth group sponsors for students to help raise funds to ensure every student who wants to can go on one of our summer trips is able to participate.

This fundraiser does more than just help students with actual scholarship funds to help them go on these trips. They've consistently helped ensure that every adult youth leader who desires to invest in students on a trip with us can at no cost to them. These funds also help cover transportation costs for the summer trips.

We are so grateful for the kindness of our church, and how it generously donates finances towards the Student

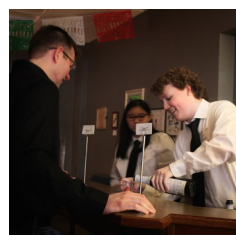
Ministries. We are also amazed at how so many from around the church selflessly show up to give their time and talents for this event!

When you come to this amazing meal, you get the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with friends, family, and neighbors. In addition, you can meet teens from our church that you might not otherwise know or interact with. Sign up, beginning Feb 5th, to attend and enjoy the fellowship and delicious food of Terrace on Chicago.

If you have students—6th-12th grade—we'd love for you and your teen to get involved and volunteer for TOC! Please sign up to make this fun event happen!

*-Jason Pensa*

*Student Pastor*



**OUTREACH COMMISSION UPDATE**

In recent communication with ReachGlobal, the total picture of missions was compared to a spear. The tip being the missionaries out in the field. However, the tip of the spear, without a "supporting shaft" is difficult and ineffective to wield. Many of our missionaries transitioned to supporting roles after returning from the field that are vital to the work being done around the world. They use their years of experience to pastor or support other missionaries and serve in administration, teaching, and other roles.

These past few months, the Outreach Commission has seen many changes we wanted to share but also encourage you to join us in prayer for our missionaries as they transition.

**Timothy and Carolyn Dahlin** will be retiring from ReachGlobal this year. They have been extremely instrumental in the Latin American Division and the ministry of ProMETA. In an update from last year, they remained in an official part time capacity because they were so valuable and are actively training personnel to

continue God's work. Timothy has asked us to be in prayer for the ministry of ProMETA as they equip more workers to train Latin Americans.

**Beth Thompson** will be retiring at the end of February 2023 and her husband Jack will continue in a post retired staff role with ReachGlobal. Their ministry has spanned multiple countries and ministries including launching Bucharest Christian Academy in Romania and later ministering to missionary families in Eastern and Central Europe. Most recently, Beth served on the ESL Ministry Resource Team.

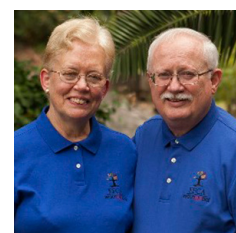
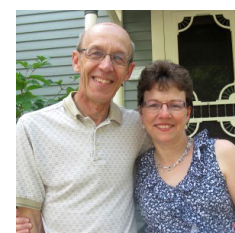
**Anastasia Gerhardt** has decided to resign from ReachGlobal. She has been working toward physical healing from a concussion and many people in our church have been lifting her up in prayer. During that time of physical healing, she also took time to think, pray, and reflect on her next steps which led to this decision. She is currently considering going back to school and is optimistic for what God has in store for her.

**Katie Dudgeon** is transitioning from ReachGlobal Europe to a new role as the Director of Strategic Development for EFCA West in California. She will be integrating her experience in Europe to plant churches, strengthen leaders, and reach people in multiple West Coast states.

These changes have allowed the Outreach Commission to develop new connections with other missionaries leading to one-time financial gifts. Additionally, we have increased our contributions to the EFCA Fair Share and the North Central District. Special donations were sent to two ReachGlobal missionaries, Josh Krato (Czech Republic) and Denny Debruyne (Germany). To answer a need expressed by John Gerhardt, we were able to send an additional donation to support the work of Urban Impact in New Orleans.

*-Bryant Dittmer*

*Outreach Commission Chair*



*Left to right: Timothy and Carolyn Dahlin, Jack and Beth Thompson, Anastasia Gerhardt, Katie Dudgeon*

**A MESSAGE FROM THE CARING COMMISSION**

In 2 Kings 4, there is an amazing story about Elisha helping a widow who had nothing. Through a miracle of God's provision, all her jars were filled with oil to overflowing, until she had no other jar to fill.

Like this story, we are thankful for the abundant giving of our church family to our benevolent fund. Through our benevolent fund we have been able to stand in the gap and help families and individuals who have had unexpected expenses be able to pay for heat, get parts for their car, pay for gas, have money for groceries or just needed a little help when a job ended. Through your generosity, God has been faithful to provide not just what we thought we needed but extra so

we could help with unexpected requests.

The benevolent fund is managed by our Caring Commission. If you would like to donate to help our those in need in our church, you can donate specifically to the benevolent fund (this fund is giving which is outside our general fund) by designating "benevolent fund" on the memo of your check or by using the drop down menu on our online giving page.

If you are in need of help or know of someone in the church who has unexpected expenses and needs some help, please let one of the pastors know or talk to someone on the Caring Commission.

Thank you for helping us bless others.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

View past newsletters, listen to previous sermons and check upcoming events.

firstfreechurch.org

**PARKING UPDATE**

Minneapolis has declared parking restrictions beginning Jan 29. No parking on the even side of residential streets.

**PRAY WITH US**

Contact the church office if you would like to receive our weekly prayer email or Pastor Joel's Friday Update.