



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
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# First Word

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FEBRUARY 2024

## *Living as God's Family* BY JAY POUND

In the Summer before I started ninth grade, I began attending mandatory practices for my High School marching band: the Lexington Band of Gold. A lot of mandatory practices. A lot of long, mandatory practices. And to be honest, I did not really enjoy myself. I had largely joined the band because I had played the trumpet since 5th grade, and my mom—who had loved her four years of marching band—all but insisted that I try it for a year. So having signed up with moderate enthusiasm, I found the many practices to be long, repetitive and often tedious. But in the director's defense, there is just no shortcut to memorizing several pieces of music, together with some fairly elaborate marching directions—where perfect timing and position is crucial. All of that requires a lot of repetition and practice, at least if you want to be good. And the Band of Gold wanted to be superior.

As Fall arrived, I was weary of practices and pretty certain that marching band was not for me. But then, something happened that completely changed the way I felt about all of our work and practices. At our first competition, as we watched other bands and prepared to compete, I not only understood all the time and repetition we had spent during the summer, I was glad for it. As we marched and played, I felt the joy of being something larger than me, of hard work that paid off, and of doing something with excellence. And later, when we took home the top awards, I knew the joy of

having that recognized by others. I had finally understood and experienced the purpose, the reason for all of the hours of hard work. And knowing the purpose, experiencing the reason, changed the way I felt about doing the work.

Toward the end of Acts chapter 2, we read about the very beginning of what we would call the church. A diverse group of believers, united by their loyalty to Jesus as their Messiah and savior, had begun meeting together regularly. And Luke tells us that their meetings were characterized chiefly by a few activities: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (2:42). They sold their possessions to help those in need, met together daily in the temple courts and broke bread in each other's homes (46).

I see in this description an interesting mix. On the one hand, they devoted themselves to things we would consider spiritual disciplines: they were devoted to the apostles' teachings and to prayer. They took seriously the hard work of spiritual growth, of studying God's word and obeying it. They committed themselves to spending significant time in communication with God in prayer. And, on top of all of that, they held their own possessions loosely and gave generously to those who were in need.

But alongside all of that praiseworthy study and discipline, I see something else: they also devoted themselves to fellowship and to the breaking of bread

together. They met together all the time, "unofficially," and they spent time in each other's homes. I like to think about it this way: they were not only committed to the hard (but rewarding!) work of learning how to live as the family of God, they were committed to spending time actually being the family of God.

The analogy isn't perfect (none are), but reflecting on this is what made me think of my time in marching band. Devoting ourselves to reading—and obeying—scripture, devoting ourselves to prayer in many ways like those Summer practices. There is no shortcut—they take time, effort and discipline, and while some days those can be deeply rewarding, some days we struggle to summon the motivation. And that is where breaking bread together, hanging out together, and just enjoying each other—fellowship—can be a massive benefit. In many ways, they are like the band competitions. When we actually live as God's family, do family things together—it reminds us why we put in the work. When we live as God's family, we are anticipating in the present the joy that awaits us in eternity. The joy of dwelling together with God—and with his family.

So let us devote ourselves to God's word, and to prayer. But let us also devote ourselves to fellowship, to eating together, and hanging out in each others' homes. And as we do all of these things together, with glad and sincere hearts, may God add to our number those who are being saved (2:46-47)

## Outreach Sunday

FEBRUARY 25



### *Sunday Speaker: Tom Ives*

Tom is the president of Reign Ministries whose mission is to expose students to the world's burning need for a Savior, equip them to meet that need through discipleship, ignite in them a passion to serve and send them home to be actively involved in ministry and impact their world for Christ.

Did you know First Free Church is actively involved in a housing ministry for refugees, right here in our neighborhood? Please join your First Free family as we gather at church Sunday morning, February 25 at 9:00 a.m. to learn about our church's housing ministry and its impact on those who serve, those in need, and our neighbors. Wendy Meyering from Arrive Ministries will also discuss global migration and how we can be involved in serving new immigrants in our community. Discover what role you might play in seeking to "DO GOOD" to those around us!

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## Our Mission:

TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED &  
CHRIST-SENT TOGETHER

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Outreach Sunday — Sunday February 25
- Quarterly Celebration — Monday February 19, 7:00-8:00 p.m. on zoom
- Terrace on Chicago — Saturday March 9, 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.
- Expressions — Sunday February 11 & 25 at 2:00 p.m.

## CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

### The Faith of a Child

As told to Rick and Edie Olson

As early as Evelyn Peterson was able to reason she just knew there had to be a God who created everything. But there was neither a Bible nor mention of God in her house. But little Evelyn just knew that someone created everything.

Until the age of seven, Evelyn, third oldest of eight children, grew up in the small town of Parkers Prairie, Minnesota. There was a church across the street, but neither she nor anyone else in her family of 8 children ever attended that church,

Her only chance was when she and her two older brothers were allowed to attend one day of VBS at the Baptist Church in town. At the age of six or seven, she finally heard about Jesus. It would be many years before she had her next encounter with the Gospel.

In 1928, when she was seven, the family moved to a small rented farm about nine miles from town. The children, now eleven in number, slept two or three to a bed. Evelyn still wondered about God.

When she began high school, she moved to town to assist an elderly woman who needed help with laundry and the coal-fired furnace. Nine miles was too far to walk to school. During ninth grade she went to the Baptist Church every week.

Someone there lent her a Bible, and about the only thing Evelyn did besides school work and housework was read and study the Bible. She accepted Jesus as her savior that year in town.

But the next year the family moved closer to town, so now Evelyn was back with her family. After receiving a free Bible from The American Bible Society, much to her mother's chagrin, she wanted to attend a nearby church. Evelyn's mother would allow it only if she took her 8 younger siblings with her. So every Sunday she got them all dressed and fed before walking to church with them.

Evelyn's testimony eventually led to the conversion of many of her siblings and also her grandfather, the man who would tell everyone in town about Jesus.

Just a little girl who knew that there must be a God who created everything.

Our condolences to the family of Evelyn Peterson who passed away at the age of 102.

### Birth Announcement

Congratulations to Ingrid and Luke Amstutz on the birth of their son Corin Peter Amstutz on January 24!



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

John & Cassie Stiles

Children:  
Isabelle, Danielle,  
Gabriel, & Samuel



Anthony & Heidi Byrne

Children:  
Jack & Penelope



# Terrace on Chicago

Terrace on Chicago is just around the corner—**Saturday March 9**. This annual youth fundraising dinner is a chance for folks to get dressed up, see the church transformed into a fancy restaurant, have a gourmet dinner, and support our youth group. Terrace on Chicago helps make it possible for students to have amazing experiences on summer trips that are formative for their faith.

- Our Velocity High School students will be headed to the EFCA national conference—Challenge. It is a week filled with passionate worship, relevant speakers and daily missions projects. It has proven to be a catalytic environment challenging students to live on mission with God every day, everywhere. This year, Challenge will happen in Kansas City, Missouri.
- The Velocity Middle School Trip this summer will combine a road trip, camping, a water park visit, and an opportunity to see God's Word come to life! We will team up with a local church ministry in Crawfordsville Indiana to be the hands and feet of Jesus. On the way we will learn about historical Christians who helped shape our country. The trip will culminate at the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter Experience in Kentucky.

Terrace on Chicago requires a dedicated team of students (6-12th graders) and parents to make it happen. We are blown away every year by how generous our Church is and the support our students receive from the local body of Christ.

So invite your friends and relatives and join us for delicious meal and a chance to get to know some of the students in our ministry as they wait upon you.

**Registrations for Terrace on Chicago will open by Sunday, February 11!**



## WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE JAY POUND AS OUR NEXT SENIOR PASTOR!

On Sunday January 28, 2024, Jay Pound was unanimously voted by the congregation to be the next Senior Pastor.

Pastor Jay has attended First Free since 2005 and has been on staff since 2012. He has served as Associate Pastor and has shared his knowledge, faith and wisdom with the First Free family through teaching, preaching, coaching staff members, volunteering to serve the community along with his family; and of course, playing pickleball with various church members.

He has a B.A. in Communication Studies from Bethel University, and an M.Div. from Bethel Seminary. He has recently completed the requirements for permanent ordination with the EFCA. Pastor Jay is married to Heidi, and they have two daughters, Liesl and Evie. We have been blessed by his ministry and service at First Free and are excited to have him step into the Senior Pastor role.

