

First Evangelical Free Minneapolis

Is 125 Years Old..

...And Still Healthy!!!



Castle Garden Immigration Center New York

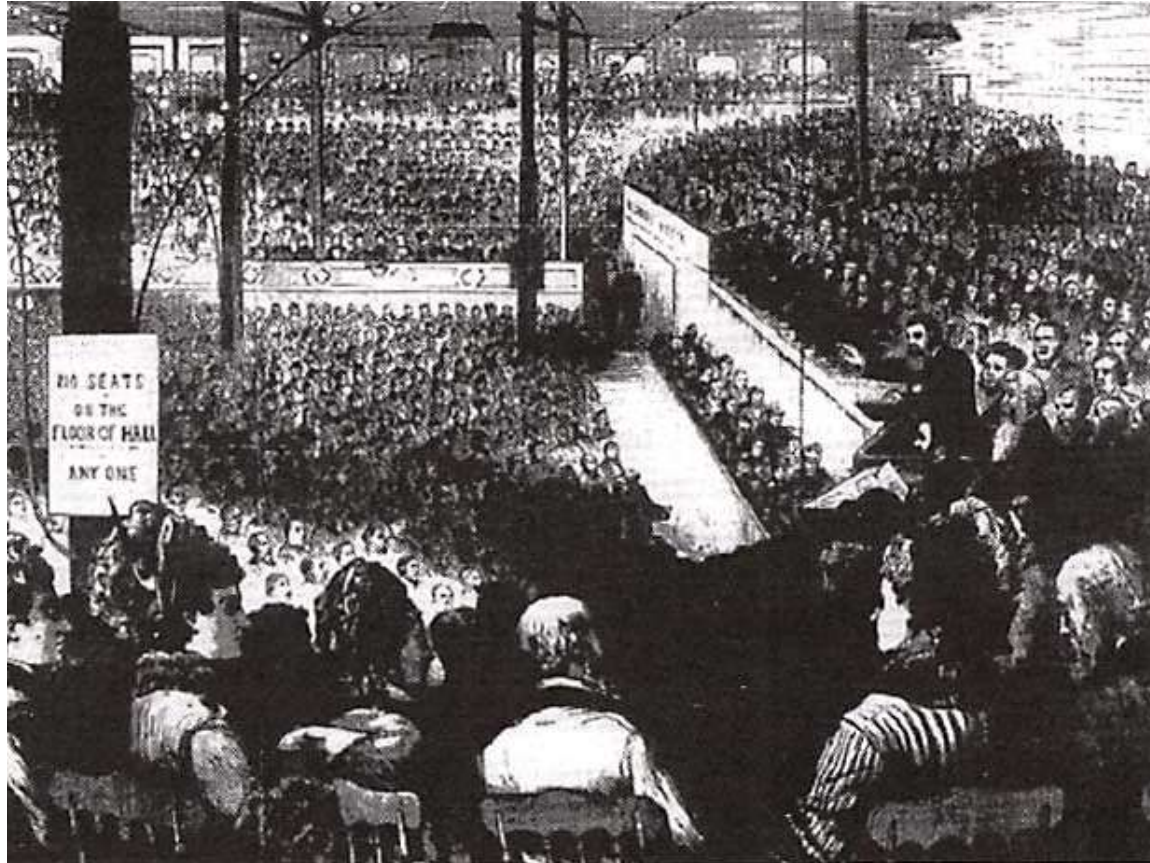
This was the first stop in America for the Scandinavian immigrants from 1855 – 1890. Ellis Island was built in 1892.



Statue of Liberty Dedicated 1886

This was not completed when First Free was founded.

It was in crates on a ship from France at that time.



D. L. Moody Revival Meeting

The techniques of Moody were copied by Frederick Franson, and Erik August Skogsbergh, Swedish evangelists.



Evangelist August Davis, Pastor 1884 - 1896

After the organization of the congregation, called "The Scandinavian Church of Christ," August Davis was called to be the pastor.



First Church Building, 1885

After meeting in Freja Hall on 5th and Washington, property was purchased and a building erected on 7th Street and 12th Avenue.



John Martenson, Publisher Chicago Bladet

This Swedish language weekly, filled with theology as well as news, was mailed to Swedes across America and even back to Sweden.



Hans Von Qualen (a Dane) First Missionary of The Swedish Evangelical Free Church

In 1884 in Boone Iowa, 27 Swedish congregations affiliated to form what became the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America. In 1887, the first missionary went to China.



Carl Sahlstrom, Pastor 1896 - 1903

He came to a church discouraged by discord . He was a calming and maturing influence. His preaching often dealt with the Lord's return.



Women's Groups

Although this picture is from a later era, in 1890 the Women's Foreign Missionary Society was formed by 15 young women of Scandinavian Church of Christ , raising money to send a Mrs. Renius to China for 15 years.



Scandinavian Church of Christ (First Free) Choir 1905

Music was important and a choir was organized soon after the founding of the congregation.



Anton E. Halleen, Pastor 1904 - 1917

Under his pastorate, the building was enlarged, membership grew to 700 with attendance often exceeding 1000, aided by the “Fourth Wave” of Swedish immigration, mostly young single adults.



1908 Building, located on the same site

With a wrap-around balcony, the sanctuary seated 1000. The building also housed the Swedish Free Church School from 1910 to 1914 before it moved to Chicago.



Stained Glass Windows Donated For the New Building By The Sunday School 1908

Still in place in the 12th Street building, the windows depict Christ rescuing the lost sheep and knocking at the heart's door.



12th Street Church Decorated for Christmas 1908

Much effort and expense went into getting the building ready for the celebration of Christmas.



String Band, c 1910

Typical string bands also usually included mandolins and zithers.



Confirmation Class 1914

The importance of evangelizing and discipling the next generation was appreciated from the beginning of the congregation and both a Sunday School and Confirmation began early.



Girls Sunday School Class 1912-1913

The founders knew from experience in the old country that salvation was not hereditary and the love of God's Word must be instilled in young people.



1913 National Conference of Swedish Evangelical Free Church

Many national meetings were hosted by the 12th Avenue Church, with its large sanctuary and central location.



Frikyrkan (Free Church) Men's Bible Class 1915

Adult education was known to be just as important as education of children, especially because there were always many new believers.



John Kalson, Pastor 1918 - 1920

Many committed themselves to the Lord at the evening evangelistic services. Pastor Kalson once jumped from the platform to emphasize a point and because of it was criticized. Yet one of the converts that night became a missionary.



S. C. Theodore Ramsey, Pastor 1921 - 1924

The first American-born pastor of the congregation, he helped in the transition to bilingual services as young people increasingly wanted services in English. He had a strong teaching ministry and was also active in the community



Children's Sunday School in the 1920s

Education of children continued to be a high priority.



Carl Liljequist, Pastor 1924 - 1926

Liljequist was an effective Swedish evangelist who came to America at age 21. When the congregation asked him to preach alternate services in English, he struggled with the language.



Kindergarten Sunday School, 1925 - 1926

The class included Viola Johnson (Fjellman) and the late Glen Nordell.



Carl J. E Nelson, Pastor 1926 – 1930, Milton G. Nelson, Pastor 1927 - 1929

Both men were bilingual and served both First Free and Central Free (a church plant of First Free) alternating churches and languages. They differed on Calvinism vs Arminianism and the churches eventually separated over that issue.



Sterling Quartet, 1920s

The quartet, which included the late Herb Nordin, in the mid 1920s made their most memorable tour of 28 concerts ending in Los Angeles at the Angeles Temple of the flamboyant Aimee Semple McPherson .



Confirmation Class 1928

In the back row is Winifred Larson who became a well known Christian singer, sometimes called "The Swedish Kate Smith" because of her big voice.



Immanuel Bible Class in the 1920s

This was the men's Sunday School class which continued for several decades.



Willing Workers 1925

The class began in 1911 as a single women's club and service organization. They organized a Glee Club in 1915 and continued their existence until 1955 when they merged into Women's Guild.



William B. Hallman, Pastor 1931 - 1935

Pastor Hallman preached on Biblical prophecy at a time when it was going out of fashion, but his ultra-dispensationalist views were controversial. The Great Depression was a difficult time for the church.



Confirmation Class 1932

The ministry of instruction continued in spite of widespread unemployment and economic hardship.



Choir 1933

The choir also continued despite the Depression, led by Albin Anderson who held that position as well as organist for 50 years.



High School Girls Sunday School Class 1936

The class included (left to right) 1st Row: Wilma Anderson (Johnson), Viola Johnson (Fjellman), Marcella Anshus (Chalberg) 2nd Row: Kathryn Peterson (Thoren), Jean Hedlund (Rosen) 3rd Row: Vivian Swanson, Bernice Anderson(?) and the teacher, Hazel Carlson (Johnson).



Joseph F. Francine, Pastor 1936 - 1948

There was actually a hiatus of 18 months before Pastor Francine arrived and Swedish Free Church President Dr. A. E. Halleen assisted in rebuilding the congregation. Pastor Francine served through the Depression and World War II. He initiated plans for a building program .



Sunday School Bus 1937

Amazingly, the church was able to own and run a bus during the Depression.



Immanuel Bible Class 1938

The class included: 1st row) Kenneth Rosen, Paul Fjellman, Clifford Swanson; 2nd row) Emil Swanson, Teacher Henry Tweed, Marvin Johnson; 3rd row) Donald Peterson, Harley Soderstrom, La Vern Anshus, Enoch Thoren and Dane Skoglund



Choir 1938

The choir in 1938 includes Vi Johnson(Fjellman)

First row left side



Sunday School Teachers and Officers 1938

These were the teachers and leaders of the Sunday School.
There are some who will be recognized by the "old timers."



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

12th Avenue S. and 7th Street
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Joseph F. Francine. Pastor

Sunday Services:

Sunday School	_____	10:15 A. M.
Morning Worship	_____	11:00 A. M.
Junior League and Y. P. Soc.	_____	5:30 P. M.
Evangelistic Service	_____	7:30 P. M.
Thursday 8:00 P. M.	_____	Midweek Service

1943 Ad in the Evangelical Beacon

Sunday School 10:15 am

Morning Worship 11:00 am

Junior League and Young People's Society 5:30 pm

Evangelistic Service 7:30 pm

Midweek Service Thursday 8:00 pm



Children's Sunday School, c 1940s

The exact date is not certain but the location is the basement of the 12th Avenue church.

Tech. Serg. ROBERT GARDNER
2-10, E. 8th Street
Colorado Springs, Colo.

P.F.C. HENRY SWEENEY, 19027051
64th. Fighter Group, 78th. Fighter
Group, A.F.C. 3542, 5 Postmaster
New York City, N.Y.

WESLEY BYRON,
2912 Fortland Ave.
Minneapolis, Minn.

CLYDE E. BROWN, S.S. 18,
U.S.A. 2, 1st Postmaster
San Francisco, Calif.

Capt. L. J. JOHNSON, C. 77,
190th. Inf. Trng. Sq. U.S. Army
San Antonio, Tex.

1st Lt. Wm. Thomas MASON
South Platte, A.F.C. Student Det.
Lubbock, Texas.

Capt. J. L. LORING
2nd Lt. W. Shelby Wood,
Birmingham, Ala.

Capt. LAWRENCE JOHNSON
1010 - Grand Avenue, Jr. Room
Lux Vogue City Gunnery School
Las Vegas, Nevada.

PRAYER LIST
FOR OUR BOY'S..



LADIES AID SOCIETY
FIRST EV. FREE CH...
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

SOLDIER BOYS PRAYER LIST

PHILEAS 4, C.

1st. IRLAND JOHNSON, Co. "C" 104th. Inf.
A.F.C. 1 St. Camp Shelby, Miss.

Capt. Lt. ROBERT J. COLLINS, C-1041008
Herd, Sta. Hospital, Lister Garrison
Fort Ord, Calif.

1st. T. E. MILLER, O-750000
Lobion Hotel, U.S. Army,
St. Joseph, Missouri

RAF CARL J. O'S. Bonds
San Francisco, Calif.

C-0. GEORGE E. BOWELL
Class 1048 B, Squadron 4, Group 4,
First Beach, Florida.

P.F.C. HAROLD WINTERSON, A.S. 25000000
80th. Co. 2nd. Inf. 1st. Div.
A.F.C. 2, Resort Innkeepers, 3 Postmaster
Los Angeles, Calif.

Serg. THOMAS C. BAKER, 27th. Fighter Squad,
Tuscoro, Washington.

1st. CLIFFORD WILSON, 1st College Ave.
Fresno, Calif.

Capt. RICHARD STANLEY, 2501st Co. "1"
414th. Inf. A.F.C. 10, Camp Blair, Ore.

Capt. W. W. BROWN, A.S. 8, Squadron "E"
Salt Lake City, Utah.

WILSON WILSON,
Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Capt. PAUL SWANSON, Co "C"
84th. Inf. Trng. Bn.
Camp Dallas, Texas

WALTER BROWN, A.S. 0, B-0
U.S. Naval Air Station, Box 10
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Capt. ROBERT E. LORING,
C. 1041008, 104th. Div.
Camp Blair, Ore.

IRLAND E. BYRON, 1917 Sheridan Ave. N.
Minneapolis, Minn.

Pvt. HARVEY S. BROWN
2d. and 7th. Co. Reception Center
Fort Snelling, Minn.

Pvt. LAWRENCE JOHNSON
Minneapolis, Minn.

Pvt. CLARENCE STOKES
Reg. 80th. Co. 84th. Air Field,
A.F.C. 2nd Camp Campbell, Kentucky

RAY E. ELWOOD, Battery 44 Mater. I.W.O.T.C.
Camp Casey, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Capt. W. COLLINS, S. 1. 2nd. C.
Div. 1, Submarine Base,
1st21 Harbor, T.S.

Capt. THOMAS JOHNSON, 25100000
40th. Signal Co., A.F.C. 40,
3 Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

Pvt. WALTER BROWN, Co. "C"
25th. Signal Trng. Bn.
U.S. Army Camp Crocker, Ia.

WILSON JOHNSON A.S. 76 Bn. 10,
Co. 1st Marine Bn. 25th. Marines, Ichoe

Prayer List for those in the Service 1945

There are 31 names on this list.

Other sources indicate that altogether 53 served.



Confirmation Class 1945

The last wartime Confirmation Class



Arnold T. Olson, Pastor 1948 - 1952

Dr. Olson was president of the Norwegian Danish Free Church when he became pastor of First Free. He would be chair of the merger conference with the Swedish Free church and would chair the combined Evangelical Free Church of America from 1952 – 1976.



Sunday School Social at the new parsonage 1950

The parsonage at 5225 Park was built before the new church building but after the lots were purchased on 52nd and Chicago.



Building Committee 1950

Some of the key leaders from the era of the move to south Minneapolis.



Groundbreaking 1950

On April 16, 1950 ground was broken at 52nd and Chicago



View of the Sanctuary November 26, 1950

Progress was made. One of the apprentice carpenters was Chris Vatsaas who recalls Dr. Olson coming to pray for the workers.



Building completed and in use

Midweek services began using the building in April 1951 but the first morning services were held June 8, 1951 and the building dedicated July 15. A Wurlitzer organ was donated by long time organist Albin Anderson



Boys' Sunday School 1952

The class included Tom Axelson, Doug Mason and Jerry Koland and was taught by Effie Farrell.



Girls' Sunday School Class 1952

Maybe you recognize some of the faces.



Leonard Hagstrom, Pastor 1953 - 1962

Pastor Hagstrom prepared the church for further growth and expansion, was instrumental in getting the mortgage liquidated and initiated a radio broadcast called "Moments with the Master."



Confirmation Class 1953

Pastor Hagstrom's Confirmation Classes were thorough and comprehensive. Is that why there are no boys in this class?



Male chorus Visits Stillwater Prison 1954

A wonderful ministry opportunity. Everyone made it back out OK.



FCYF 1956

Free Church Youth Fellowship had been started nation-wide and First Free had an active chapter. Eventually at national FCYF conferences, Bible Quizzes and talent contests took place. What has happened to these young people?



Children's Musical 1958

The nautical theme extended to sailor hats for all the kids in the audience.



Kids' Sunday School 1958

Opening Exercises for the younger children in the room below the choir loft.



Perfect Attendance Pins c 1950s

The second year pin had a place to hang bars for the third year, fourth year, etc. If you were competing, illness couldn't keep you home.



Junior Choir 1958

The Junior Choir sang under the directorship of music Minister Don Bisdorf.



Mortgage Burning 1958

The church was debt-free after just 7 years in the new building.



Battalion (Christian Service Brigade) 1958

Games, achievements and leadership training were emphasized.



Stockade (Christian Service Brigade) 1958

Basketball had to be played at Central Free as we had no gym.



Colonists (Pioneer Girls) 1958

In addition to achievements, Pioneer Girls had an active camping program.



Pilgrims (Pioneer Girls) 1958

The girls worked on badges, played games and developed skills.



Confirmation Class 1959

Confirmation was being held every year for 8th graders.



Car Wash 1960

A Youth Group Fund Raiser.
I wonder where that car is now?



Andrew Johnson, Pastor 1962 - 1968

Pastor Johnson continued the radio ministry and guided the church through the construction of the educational building. Because a “gym” seemed to have negative connotations , the large space with baskets became an “Activities Room.”



Pre-Bussing Ministry Bus 1962

This was a vintage 1953 bus purchased in 1962 for transportation to activities. It may have sparked the idea of an extensive bussing ministry that took place from 1973 to 1981, bringing in 5 busloads of children to Sunday School at its peak.



The Sanctuary in 1964

The wood was blond, the floor light colored, the pulpit large, three large “thrones” on the platform, piano on the right, organ console on the left, organ speakers above the balcony, stained glass windows visible behind the choir loft.



Constructing the Addition 1964

Two houses had been purchased. They were sold and moved to make room for the Educational Building.



Good Progress on the Addition

The construction progressed well through the winter and the building was dedicated May 2, 1965.



Library 1965

The new building provided more space for the library.



H. Bruce Chapman, Pastor 1968 - 1993

Pastor Chapman has been the longest serving pastor of First Free and introduced small groups, fellowship dinners and name tags. He also spearheaded the reorganization of church governance with the Council and Commissions.



Fidelis Class 1968

Adult classes were able to have their own rooms.



Deacons 1969

The new office of the pastor had space for meetings of the church leadership and for prayer gatherings.



Friendly Class String Band Reunion 1969

They could still create the sound that had moved the founders of the church over 80 years before.



Beginner Sunday School 1969

The new educational building provided excellent spaces for children's Sunday School.



Women's Guild about 1970

Women's Guild continues a missions focus, having missionary speakers , supporting and praying for missionaries and encouraging practical help, such as White Cross making bandages for the hospital in Tandala.



Confirmation Class 1972

Confirmation continued to be a major emphasis for the youth.



Barbershop Quartet, about the 1970s

Did anyone notice that they were lip-synching?



Stockade 1978-1979

The “gym” was a great boost for the club programs with lots of space to run off energy.



Manna Lifeline About 1980

The benevolent ministry, Manna Lifeline, provided food, gotten from donations by grocery stores and distributed to the needy.



Stained Glass Windows Moved 1981

Because the new pipe organ would cover the stained glass windows behind the choir loft, they were moved to their current position above the front door where they are also illuminated and visible from Chicago Avenue.



Covenant Group 1983

Covenant Groups were small groups that covenanted to make weekly attendance and participation a priority. Sharing added a deeper dimension to fellowship in the church body as a whole.



Happy Homemakers 1983

With the prevailing cultural ideas that women who stay at home are unfulfilled, Happy Homemakers was needed for sharing, learning and encouragement.



Ladies Community Bible Study

Ladies Community Bible Study reached out to women of all ages, both in the neighborhood and within the church body.



Single Spirit Class 1983

The Single Spirit Class was for post-college or early-career young people, many of who lost their eligibility by getting married.



Salt Class 1983

Salt was the youngest “couples” class in 1983, then taught by Bill Boyles.



Koinonia Class 1983

Koinonia was a class of more “mature” singles



Agape Class

Agape started as the “Gap Class” (that had fallen into the generation gap) then with the addition of two letters, became “Agape.”



Discoverers Class 1983

Discoverers was one age bracket up from Agape and in 1983 was being taught by Rev. John Walkup.



Fidelis Class 1983

Fidelis was the “middle aged class”, many of whose children were grown.



Maranatha Class 1983

Maranatha was the most senior class in 1983, having absorbed the surviving members of the longstanding "Friendly Class."



Lion Witch and the Wardrobe about 1983

The drama program reached its zenith with a full scale production of C.S. Lewis's classic, "The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe."



Centennial Picture November 1983

This picture of the congregation was taken a few months before the Centennial year in order to be printed in the Centennial Book, "Generation to Generation: the People of God."



Confirmation Class 1984

This was considered the “Centennial Class” since they completed their study in 1984, the year of the Centennial. They were taught by Youth Pastor, Marc Hamren. Where are they now?



Executive Board, 1983

The Executive Board was formed to clarify decision-making power between congregational meetings and was superseded by the Council and Commission structure after re-organization in 1989-1990.



Gene Bourland Pastor 1995 - 2000

After a 2 year hiatus filled by many visiting pastors, Pastor Bourland began his ministry. He emphasized being seeker friendly and mixing age groups within the church.



Short Term Missions Trips 1980s and 1990s

Many of our people participated in short term missions trips, helping with construction, running evangelistic outreaches or Vacation Bible Schools in various places in the US and beyond.



Construction Trip to Mexico

Both the skilled and the unskilled were given jobs to do and all came back with a renewed sense of God's power and the fellowship we can have across cultures.



New Orleans Trip 1995

The needs of the poor for basic necessities as well as love, care and the liberating message of the gospel were always apparent and the sense of being God's tool was able to enlarge the perspective of our youth.



Removal of the Old Gas Station 1995

The old gas station which had been used for bus maintenance at one time was removed to build a more useful garage and make room for events in the parking space in front of it.



Continental Singers 1995

One of the outdoor concerts inviting the neighborhood was the Continental Singers during their national and international tour.



Praise Band 1990s

The “String Band” of the founders, with a little percussion and amplification, came back in the 1990s.



Praise Dancing 1990s

The Founders of First Free may have been skeptical of “Praise Dancing,” but even though in their natural bodies, the music centers and the movement centers may not have been connected, they are now all in Glory and dancing before the Throne.



Seekers Class

The Seekers Class began in 1998 when Chinese students and Scholars, hosted by First Free families, wanted to continue coming to church. In 2009 there is a group of up to 50 on the roster and they have a weekly pot-luck after church.



Joel Sutton, Pastor 2002 - Present

Under Pastor Sutton, the church has grown in numbers and spiritual depth. Many young families have come as a result of MOPS and the club programs. The church has a healthy multi-generational multi-cultural look and feel.



Baby Dedication 2006

According to Free Church beliefs, dedication of infants is a commitment on the part of the parents and the church to raise the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.



Baptism at Lake Nokomis 2006

In August, baptisms take place at Lake Nokomis and are followed by an all church picnic.



Bibles to Kindergarteners 2008

In honor of their starting of formal education and to instill a love of God's Word, new Kindergarteners are presented with a Bible, here given by Children's Ministry Director, Beth Brown.



Children's Hike 2007

Twice a year, the 4th, 5th and 6th graders of First Free and Salem Free hike for a whole Saturday in the wild areas along the rivers.



Picnic in the Park 2009

First Free participates in the Hale-Page-Diamond-Lake Neighborhood “Picnic in the Park” giving our information, gifts, and lately, doing decorative hair coloring.



Seekers Christmas Celebration 2006

Holidays are celebrated. Here the Seekers Class and their American friends get costumed for Christmas.



Multi-cultural Speakers February 2007

During that month, four gentlemen of different ethnic backgrounds spoke on the book of Jonah. No matter how you look at him, Jonah is one of the world's most successful missionaries, but a personal spiritual disaster.



Worship Team 2009

Gifted musicians who want to minister rather than just perform, lead us in worship every Sunday morning.



Vacation Bible Camp 2009

VBC or VBS has become a yearly highlight for many kids every summer. Each year it seems to get better and better and now draws over 200 children, over half from outside the church.



Morning Service 2009

A morning service in 2009 with a view of the sanctuary from the front. Attendance during the school year at the two services is approaching 500.



Women's Neighborhood Bible Study

Women meet for study while their children play under careful supervision.



Mothers of PreSchoolers (MOPS)

Mothers are allowed to have adult conversation, interesting topics and fine refreshments, all while their children are watched and taught by volunteers.



Prayer: The Essential Ingredient For Spiritual Success

Through the weekly Prayer Meeting, bimonthly “Fresh Encounter,” Sunday Morning intercessory prayer team, individual and corporate prayer, we acknowledge that the vision and the power to carry out the task assigned to our generation comes from the Triune God.