



FIRST FREE

2019 – 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT 2020

**TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING.
IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM,
AND HE WILL MAKE STRAIGHT YOUR PATHS.**

PROVERBS 3:5-6 ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

What an appropriate verse to meditate on during times like these...right? We don't understand clearly why the pandemic is happening, we don't know when things will change back to "normal", we don't know if things will entirely get back to the "normal" we knew in the past. We are experiencing lots of changes to our lifestyles, our jobs, our schedules, our routines, how we worship, etc. This is a time of tremendous life adjustments and - let's be honest – a time of elevated anxiety. In all of this, we, as followers of Christ, must turn our eyes upon him whom we can trust, a God who understands the future in a time we certainly don't and a God whom we acknowledge as sovereign during these trying times. As a First Free family let's encourage each other and not be discouraged. This is a time which challenges our belief and forces us to live out our faith in different ways. Through it all we can support each other, pray for each other and reach out to each other in love as we move forward. We will get through this time together as a church body.

This year I need to start my report by saying thank you to Beth Brown for her many years of service at First Free. The growth of the Children's Ministry during her nearly 16 years as Director has been remarkable! God used Beth to create great experiences and programs for our young people. We have been fortunate as a church to have someone with Beth's talent and passion to lead this ministry. We appreciate all she has done and wish her all the best as we pray for the next chapter in her life. She will be missed.

Last year I shared some thoughts on the financial status of the church and was reminded of the challenges and reduced budget we approved as a congregation in May of 2019. Praise Him! Our situation going into our budgeting process this year was improved and is allowing us to present a budget for the new year at 3.58% over the current year budget. This was all planned prior to the impact of the COVID-19 environment and at the time of this report we are still on track to approach the new year with this budget. Please know the Council is working on contingency planning should the continued effect of COVID-19 impact giving. We know the outcome of this situation is ultimately in God's hands. As a congregation we need to continue to be attentive to meeting the expenses of running the church, funding the programs and supporting the staff with resources, but most importantly we want to join together and respond to God in a way that encourages giving as an act of faith and an act of worship. Pray for our church finances and give praise to God who provides all we have.

We are fortunate to have Sue Olson recently join our staff to handle our Office Administration. Welcome Sue! The recent news of Carrie Boyum being named the new Children's Ministry Director is exciting as well. We have seen Carrie's leadership as Chair of the Caring Commission and in years past leading the Search Committee for a Worship Pastor. Welcome Carrie! As my six years as Chair comes to a close, I want to thank all the Council Members who have served during my time. Your commitment and efforts are such a blessing to me and this church. Pray for Jeff Olson as he takes the baton from me. He'll do well! Thank you to those of you in the congregation who have encouraged me and prayed for me. And finally, thank you to our Staff – working with you and seeing your faith in action has been such a joy for me. I love you all.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Dutton, Council Chairman

SENIOR PASTOR

I am writing this year's annual report in my home office as we follow the Governor's Stay at Home Orders. Needless to say, this year of 2020 has begun like no other. The Corona virus pandemic has quickly forced us as a church to pivot and make changes.

I am very proud of how our team has made the switch – from meeting in our church building to meeting online. As a church we now worship together online every Sunday. Velocity student ministry is meeting online every Wednesday night. The Girl's Rock (1-3 grades) meet together every Thursday night online. Small groups and Adult Community groups are meeting every week online as well. Amazingly all this is done virtually.

As I look back, I can see that God had uniquely prepared us for this. This past February we increased Dan Fergus' time as our Tech/Communications Director. Dan has done a super job filming, editing and producing our Sunday worship services and also our weekly Wednesday devotionals.

There are three platforms where people can watch our services, Facebook, YouTube and our own webpage. As we have tracked the numbers on each of these platforms (Easter: 279 engagements on Facebook and 146 on YouTube; most recently: 162 engagements on Facebook and 67 on YouTube) we have seen a wide variety. It is hard to estimate what these numbers mean exactly in comparison to our typical Sunday attendance, but we have heard stories of friends and family members from outside the church watching our services.

This winter, we also received the hard news that Beth Brown was leaving her position of Children's Ministry Director after 15 years. Beth has grown our children's ministry from a couple of dozen children into busy full ministry that is reaching hundreds of children and is known throughout our community (read Beth's report to get the full story of the growth of our Children's Ministry). Personally, I cannot express enough of my deep appreciation and respect for Beth and her partnership through the years. She will truly be missed.

On the positive side, we are blessed to have very capable people in our church body. As a result, we have hired Carrie Boyum as our new Children's Ministry Director (30 hrs./wk). Carrie brings with her years of church leadership experience. She has a great heart and desire for children and people of all ages to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We have also hired Stacey Urbanz to be our Nursery Director (10 hrs/wk). Stacey brings great administrative gifts and years of volunteer church ministry experience. Carrie and Stacey will make a great combination for working with our children from birth – 5th grade.

So where are we going from here? As we move into the summer, we will be rolling out a plan (as the Governor of MN allows) to begin to open up slowly and gather back together – in person. Our hope is that by the fall (or sooner), we will all be back together again in community worshipping.

We are also committed to increasing our online presence. Online is where people are at. If we want to reach people for Christ, we must be online. So, we will continue to offer our services online each week. We will also continue to grow in our use of social media as a tool to reach people in our community.

Above all we will continue with our mission of “helping individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.” We want to make sure that if First Free were ever to disappear from our corner of 52nd and Chicago, our neighborhood would notice. They would miss us because of the difference we are making together. Might our good deeds create goodwill which will open the door to share the good news!

Of course, I could not finish this report without mentioning how I am surrounded by an outstanding staff team! Sue Olson joined us as our office administrator in March. It is great having her on board! Sarah Olson and Dan Fergus enable us to communicate clearly to everyone. Pastor Jay, Beth Brown, Pastor Paul, Pastor Jason, Maureen Juarez and Jeanine Bruen are each gifted and wonderful people to work with as they lead their different ministries and we work together to equip the saints. Scott Beckett continues to take care of our church facilities and David Kriesel-Koll continues as our business administrator. As a church we are blessed to have each of them. This is not only a superb team with a shared vision – but we also have a fun time together.

I especially want to say “Thank You” to Jeff Dutton, who is the Chairman of the Council. Jeff's six years as our Council Chairman is coming to a close. He has been a strong and gracious leader for us as a church. We have been blessed to have him serve us. Personally, Jeff has been a good friend. I have always trusted his wisdom and insight. He has been a great partner in the ministry. Thank you very much Jeff!

I pray that over this next year, we might continue to see many individuals becoming Christ-centered and Christ-sent as we carry out our vision together!

Joel Sutton, Senior Pastor

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

**“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds.”
(Heb. 10.23-24)**

May of 2019 seems much more than 12 months away. As I look back, it is hard to see past the last several months, which have brought major changes for our church life and ministry. And yet, as I look back on the past year of ministry, I am struck by the happy fact that despite all of the changes, most things - and the most important things, have stayed the same. As the author of Hebrews would no doubt remind us, our hope in the good news about Jesus is still the same, still as firm and secure as ever. Just as our hope is the same, our call to testify to that hope is the same. The way we do those things might have changed, but the message is still the same.

Marketfest & Neighboring 12:31

Early in the Summer of 2019 we hosted Marketfest, our annual block party, which we have run in conjunction with the Farmer’s Market for the past 3 years. Though working together presented some challenges, especially the first year, we think we now have a better event. Thanks to many wonderful volunteers and some beautiful weather, we again had great attendance, including many from the neighborhood who are regular Farmer’s Market shoppers. This continues to be a great opportunity not only to bless our neighbors, but to work with them and have fun with them too.

A little later in the Summer, Kim and Casey Foss planned and launched Neighboring 12:31, which we like to think of as a local mission trip. We know not everyone is able to go on short term missions’ trips abroad, so we wanted to bring the experience here. The vision for the event was twofold: First, we wanted to have an event focused on providing tangible service and meeting felt needs for friends and neighbors of people in our congregation. Second, we hoped to create stronger relationships within our congregation as we served, ate and worshipped together over multiple days.

The trip, which started Thursday evening and ran through a full day of serving together on Saturday, had over 70 participants from our church and tackled over a dozen projects. Looking ahead to this Summer we are excited for the opportunity to grow and fine-tune the event with the hopes that even more people from our congregation will have the opportunity to participate. We believe God has called First Free to be a light for the gospel in South Minneapolis, and we believe this will continue to be a way that we can be obedient to that call.

Affinity Groups

This past year we had an overall increase in Community Group and Small Group participation. As more new families have continued to join First Free, many have chosen to connect to Community Groups on Sunday mornings, when they can also take advantage of our excellent children’s ministries. A couple of new small groups were also launched this past year as a part of our continued push to make sure everyone at First Free is able to form significant relationships with other believers.

In addition to those more “visible” ministries, I wanted to highlight some of the exciting things happening in the area of our Affinity Groups. First, our MOPS ministry continues to reach a large number of moms from outside our church as well as many from our congregation. As always, this great ministry was made possible by the help of many faithful volunteers, and the dedication of a number of leaders (many new this year). Women’s Neighborhood Bible Study (WNBS) also had a great year, with over 60 women participating on a weekly basis, including many women from the neighborhood. Those who come join a table of 6-8 women that they talk, study and pray with throughout the year. When we were forced to suspend meetings due to COVID-19, many tables continued hosting meetings together on Zoom.

Despite the early hour, Men United continues to have solid regular attendance. Each week, this group meets for a time of discussion, usually following a video lesson. One of the greatest assets of Men United is its multi-generational composition that allows younger members to learn from those with experience and for us all to encourage and pray for each other as we try to be the men God has called us to be. Thanks to Tim Audette, Men United was also able to continue meeting virtually over the past couple of months.

Finally, 2020 also saw the launch of a GriefShare group, led by Janine Bruen and Sandra Ogren. GriefShare is specifically for those dealing with the grief of losing a loved one, and provides support, encouragement and a place to walk through that process with others. Griefshare had great participation, and we are excited to see how God will continue to use this ministry in the coming years.

Final Thoughts on a “New Normal”

The past few months have certainly not gone the way anyone on staff (or anyone at all) had planned. Like everyone else, we were confronted with the challenge of operating in a very different situation. And while much about this new ministry setting has been strange (preaching to a camera in an empty sanctuary), God has clearly used it as a time of stretching and growth for our staff and leaders. The inability to meet in person has forced us to do better with what we have. Our social media engagement has improved. We have produced more - and better videos (A big thanks to Dan Fergus, without whom things would be much different). We have learned how to teach and lead groups remotely, and have sharpened those skills (Thanks to Pastor Jason, who has led the way in that area). I have also been amazed by how quickly and effectively our leaders figured out how to continue their ministry, even from a distance (Group Leaders, Girls Rock leaders, etc.) All of these are skills that will make our ministry even better in the years to come. In other words, despite the many challenges, God has used this time to make our ministry more effective not just for the present but for the future.

Jay Pound, Associate Pastor

CREEKSIDE FRIENDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

For nearly 16 years I have been blessed to be First Free's Children's Ministry Director. My daughter, Annika, was 3 and had her own IKEA desk in my office when I began and now, she is graduating from high school. I've felt the Lord calling me to make a change and with her graduating it seemed like the right timing; I will be resigning on May 31, 2020. Allow me to share a bit of a recap of what's taken place in the children's ministry the last 15+ years.

Pastor Joel and the church leadership back in 2004 had a vision for a strong children's ministry in order to reach the families in the community. Over the last 15+ years we have seen the number of children at First Free more than triple. What began as a very part time role for me became a true passion. I was influenced by George Barna's *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions; Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Did you know that over 70% of decisions for Christ are made between the ages 4 and 14? I also learned so much and the church benefited greatly by sending me to at least 10 *International Network of Children's Ministry Children's Pastors Conferences*. This area of ministry is not to be taken lightly. Kids Matter!

In 2004 we didn't have a name for our children's ministry. It was fun to come up with "Creekside Friends" and then to have logos designed. Sarah Clinton was our only leader in the nursery. Soon after I began, we hired Mary Bostrom to be our next nursery leader and she's been on the children's team ever since! Starting in the summer of 2020 Stacey Urbanz will be our Nursery Director! She will bring experience and leadership to the nursery. During this current coronavirus pandemic, much-needed new cabinets were installed in the nursery and 2's classrooms. A dishwasher was also installed and will be a blessing to have.

Leading Vacation Bible Camp has been a true highlight of my career. We've watched VBC become our largest outreach event. But, most importantly, that means that more kids have heard the Gospel message. I LOVE what happens during VBC...seeing all the boys & girls come every day...watching 150+ volunteers come and work together all while building relationships. My favorite is watching the kids learn the songs by the end of the week and then to hear stories of how they continue to sing and dance to the music all year long. We've been blessed to have strong VBC leadership teams. JoAnn Burns led our fantastic "ROAR" VBC in 2019 and Becki Kobiush and her 2020 team felt the call to provide a virtual "STAYcation Bible Camp" this summer. It's all because Kids Matter.

The summer of 2019 was a very busy one as Jason Pensa and I worked toward moving the 6th graders out of the children's ministry and into the youth group. This unique group of preteens has benefited from having a place in the middle school ministry. I am also thankful for the partnership and friendship I've had with Jason; he was a joy to work alongside.

Thank you to our Sunday Team of 2019-2020 who remained so committed to the children. And they supported the implementation of our check-in system! With 2 check-in stations, all kids in grade 5 and under needed to check in and parents adapted well to our new policies. This helped us create an even safer environment for the children at First Free, more accurate attendance records and an easier way to meet visitors! We couldn't have done all this without Erika Garcia. She oversaw our Welcome Crews on both Sundays and Wednesdays and she was such a warm, welcoming presence to greet our families! I am thankful to have had Erika as my Children's Ministry Assistant for 18 months and blessings to her as she pursues her nursing degree!

Thank you to all our Creekside Clubs leaders from over the years. Each year we have had committed men and women who led the boys and girls on Wednesday nights. I remember the year when we had 50 kids show up and we were ecstatic! Then 100 kids. In 2019 we've had 75 kids, a lower number due to the 6th graders moving up. It was sad to not be able to finish out our clubs this year due to Covid-19. We brought closure to the year by creating and sending a video for families to watch at home!

2019-2020 was a year of many updates and changes. Thank you to Tim Lund and Sherie McClun for supporting the children's ministry by updating the classrooms with some much-needed paint and decorating! It mattered because Kids Matter.

Carrie Boyum will be a fabulous Children's Ministry Director. I've known Carrie for over 20 years. In fact, her husband, Jon, and she led the youth group with my husband, Doug, on a mission's trip to Slovakia and Budapest in 2001, weeks before Annika was born. Isn't it amazing how the Lord orchestrates our lives!

First Free, I pray that you will always give your very best to the children. I'm truly thankful for Pastor Joel's support over the years and for his endless support of the children's ministry. I will feel forever blessed by the amazing volunteers I've led and ministered beside. I will miss giving out Bibles to Kindergartners and to any child who doesn't have one. I'll miss promoting Camp Shamineau, a place I love. I'll cherish the staff I've worked with over the years; this current team is phenomenal. I'll pray for the children whom I just love. And, please remember.... Kids Matter.

Let's give our very best to the children.

Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught. And be grateful. Colossians 2:7

With Joy and Gratitude,

Beth Brown, Children's Ministry Director

2004-2020

VELOCITY STUDENT MINISTRY

VELOCITY YOUTH GROUP: It's been a year wrought with lots of change for our student ministries. This past fall we launched our separate Middle School and High School Ministries which coincided with moving sixth grade students into that middle school program. We've hit great strides with students as we've brought Doug Nelson in to run our Middle School Ministries. Finding our rhythm in that has been challenging but also really rewarding. While I knew that it was possible long-term for our program to grow under this new change, I didn't realize how much we would grow or how quickly. We've seen a significant uptick in numbers than anticipated in both our Middle School and High School programs after this program split. However, this season of change has not been without hardships. In these socially distant quarantine days, our Student Ministries has moved entirely online using tools like YouTube and Zoom. This has been hard as both leaders and students suffer from both video-conferencing and screen fatigue as well as deeply missing in-person contact.

STUDENT MINISTRIES PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS: This past year with a complete uptick in logistics and that meant more volunteers and one very-part-time staff helping with different areas behind the scenes. We've had volunteers helping to coordinate what our different Student Ministry Team students do in their "sub-teams" on a Wednesday night, we had volunteers help lead the Student Ministry Team and help with the back-end stuff such as setting up registrations, coordinating food, meeting locations and much more. We basically have a whole team of people helping to coordinate a lot of the behind-the-scenes stuff. This has been helpful given what my family has personally been through in the past year and given the size of our student ministry. This continues to be an area that needs further growth and efficiency.

LEAD THE CAUSE 2019: This last summer, four youth leaders and sixteen Sr. High students went to Chicago, IL to be a part of the Sonlife & Dare2Share conference, called Lead the Cause. This trip was designed to create Gospel movement within our student ministry by using intense prayer, training and street evangelism to give us opportunities to practice sharing Jesus with others. Students got to hear from great speakers challenging them with how they're leading their own lives-who are they reaching and who they are sharing the life-changing message of Jesus with? This is emphasized by prayer walks and practicums where we went out on the streets of Chicago to share the good news of Jesus with strangers. I continue to this day hear about ways this event has helped bring about the most life-change in our students who went.

CZECH MISSIONS TRIP 2019: This last summer three youth leaders and seven Sr. High students went to Malenovice (in eastern Czech Republic) for training and to help run English camp alongside a local church from Trinec. Our students got to experience peer-to-peer relational ministry for a week of camp with the goal to help Czech students develop their conversational English. They helped run games, run the evening programs, led the camp dance and do silly motions to songs and even roomed with students. Once camp was over, they got to do in-home stays with various students from camp to continue relationships and live out the gospel in a real way in those homes. This was capped off by a "follow-up" event where we helped connect students to the local Church in Trinec. The powerful thing about this experience is how real it was, we got to be a part of a local church halfway around the world's outreach, their way to connect with their local community and spread the love of Jesus. It is really neat to see our students connect with teens from another culture, in spite of a language and culture barrier in a place where less than 1% of their people are Christian.

JR. HIGH ADVENTURE TRIP 2019: This last summer, six youth leaders, two student ministry team students and twenty-two Jr. High students went to Rock Ridge in Ely, MN with the opportunity to engage in experiences that pushed students to their limits. They had opportunities to go high-roping, zip-lining, canoeing, river-tubing, hiking, and swimming in one of the most pristine parts of nature. To cap off our evenings, we had campfires and devotions to help us bond together and discover who we are in Christ.

STUDENT MINISTRY TEAM: We've almost had the Student Ministry Team going for three years now. This past year I've continued to challenge students with how they might live like Jesus did. What were the things that He did and what did He talk about? I anticipated that with a predominant number of our seniors leaving our Student Ministry Team to head off to college that we would have a much smaller number on our Student Ministry Team. But I was wrong. We had a lot of new students apply and be accepted onto the team so that our team is bigger than ever. It has continued to be the highlight of my year working with these fantastic students.

TERRACE ON CHICAGO & SUMMER 2020: This year at Terrace on Chicago you all generously helped support our Sr. High students going to Challenge and our Middle School students going on the Middle School High Adventure Trip at Rock Ridge. We enjoyed a delicious Czech Feast (one of my favorite meals we've ever done at a Terrace on Chicago). With your help we raised almost \$20,000. Unfortunately, with the current pandemic going on in the world, our trip to the Czech Republic has been cancelled and only time will tell what will happen to our other anticipated trips. Please be in prayer for our students as disappointment is a challenging emotion to deal with at a young age.

IN CONCLUSION: I am so thankful for the opportunities I've had to be a part of this amazing journey. It is an honor to be able to be a part of so many groups-with so many relationships and connections. What a great time to see God's hand at work in our midst-even if it is fraught with new challenges. You keep hearing, "when will things return to normal?" I'm not sure things ever will completely return to normal-and that's ok, because with change we get to see new angles on how God is at work. New challenges mean new opportunities. We are all about the mission here at Velocity Student Ministries, to propel students toward Jesus-regardless of whether that be online or in person and no matter what that looks like a year from now. I want to leave you with this encouragement, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." (Philippians 1:27)

Jason Pensa, Student Ministry Pastor

WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY

This ministry year has obviously concluded with one of the most peculiar eras in recent church history. It can be hard to remember what worship was like before COVID 19 and the “stay at home” orders kicked in, but I think it’s important to recap the good that we participated with God in doing together both before this peculiar season and during it.

Pre-COVID

During this phase of our ministry year, I was excited to see new leaders serving in our ministry department. With a growing roster of musicians & a/v techs, it was encouraging to begin to see the development of young leaders in their teenage years finding a place to share their giftings with our community. I remember a friend who works as the director of church planting for another denomination being over our house one Saturday night and lamenting about the absence of young people he saw serving in Sunday morning music ministry, “When was the last time you saw a 14 or 15 year old up on a stage on a Sunday morning?” I told him, “Well, you can come pay us a visit tomorrow because we’ve got a young leader on our platform tomorrow!” I think this speaks to the quality of student ministry and the discipleship that parents are doing to help their children step into the callings of God on their lives, but I also think it’s testament to some of our musicians who have stepped into mentoring roles and to our tech director, Dan Fergus, who has provided opportunities for several of them learn in our tech booth.

I’m also happy with the musical growth and development of our musicians and singers over this past year. That musical growth as a team emerges out of relational and spiritual growth together, improving our ability to communicate together musically. It also happens as the Spirit of God empowers people with boldness to be leaders with their craft. As a team, we gave a lot more time to our times of sharing and praying together this year, which only led to more enjoying and fulfilling rehearsals, making it an even greater joy to serve our congregation on Sunday mornings.

I have also been encouraged by the growing participation of our congregation in leading us in other practices of worship besides singing. We have had lay leaders in our congregation leading us in Scripture readings, creating beautiful art to adorn our foyer with, sharing their faith story, and even leading us in prayer.

During COVID

Obviously, many things shifted in our regular rhythms of worship when the pandemic hit. Perhaps most obvious has been our inability to safely gather in person together for worship. This is a deep loss, and it is okay for us to grieve that loss. Acknowledging this loss does not negate our call to be a *Christ-Centered & Christ-Sent* people even when we cannot be physically *together*. I want to commend all of the staff of their ability to adapt to leading us in worship from our homes online via video. We have worked hard during this season (especially Dan Fergus who films and edits the videos) to adapt what happens in our Sunday worship services to fit an online video that you would participate with in worship at home.

Worshipping at home in this format has also afforded us the opportunity to consider trying some things in our virtual worship that may work as people worship at home in a way that potentially wouldn’t work as well in person. Our Good Friday service was very much an experiment in offering a contemplative, interactive service that was very different from an in-person Good Friday service. It has also been fun to see people interacting in the comments section as they watch on Facebook together, or seeing the ways we can incorporate videos and pictures from people at their homes into our worship videos.

We are so thankful for the steady financial support that has allowed us to purchase the necessary equipment to make these virtual worship services happen, and we see this season as an opportunity for us to consider how we can continue to help you make your home a sanctuary of worship even when we can gather together in person once again.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13

In Christ,

Paul Anleitner, Worship Pastor

FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES

Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Faith Community Nurses worked together to serve the congregation, Jeanine and Maureen as part of the Ministry Staff and Dee as a volunteer.

There were 267 visits made from July 2019-March 11, 2020 by the Faith Community Nurses, other Ministry Staff, and 7 volunteers. With the quarantine resulting from the Corona Virus, a system was developed for contacting Seniors and others, with additional volunteers assisting in this effort.

The FCNs supported others as they ministered to the congregation, through the blood pressure clinic, gifts to new babies, distributing prayer shawls, sending cards, staffing a first aid station at VBC, organizing meals and transportation, and most recently sewing masks. They served on the Caring Commission.

The FCNs led groups or facilitated the offering of classes on visitation, CPR, Fall Prevention, Expressions, Legal Issues for older adults, and Health Care Directives. A Task Force on Mental Health and Drug Use was initiated. Preparation has been made for a new course on Living Well with Chronic Conditions.

The quarantine affected many of the roles of the FCNs as they supported groups in church such as MOPS and the Women's Bible Study.

The FCNs assisted those in the neighborhood through organizing a blood drive and a flu clinic. They served as preceptors for a nursing student needing clinical experience. They represented First Free in the denominational meetings and in the Faith Community Nurse Network of the Twin Cities.

The Wellness Advisory Team met three times last year to provide support, to the FCNs. Holly Doble, Doug Erickson, Dee Huanca, John Lande, Gail Marchand, Phyllis Nordin, and Darlene Swanson and Katie Klenk are team members.

Home goings since the last report: Geraldine Bjork, Dale Bostrom, Don and Gen Erickson, Bernice Hultstrand, Priscilla Johnson, Art Osterlund, June Peick, Asher Pierre-Louis, and Ardell Thomas.

In God's Love,

Jeanine Bruen, FCN, and Maureen Juárez, FCN

CARING COMMISSION

In scripture we are admonished to “love one another.” The Caring Commission is charged with overseeing some of the ways we care for one another and love one another as the Body of Christ.

This year the Caring Commission has been made up of eight members: Carrie Boyum, Anne Nordell, Apryl Hultstrand, Allie Danielson, Lori Graham, Maureen Juarez, Jeanine Bruen and Darlene Swanson. As a group we work together and pray together for wisdom and guidance as we care for those in our congregation.

The Benevolent Fund is one of our primary areas of service. The fund continues to grow, thanks to the very generous contributors in our church family. The funds are primarily given to families and individuals in our church who are in need of help. Many people have received financial assistance this year. At Christmas about \$5000 in gift cards was gifted to those in our church family who could use an extra blessing and to our beautiful group of widows. It is such a privilege to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to use the resources that have been so generously given by our committed church family to bless others in our church body who need help.

In November, we coordinated a food and personal hygiene drive at church to support Community Emergency Services (CES), a local ministry and resource that we often direct those in need to.

We are privileged to have First Free’s two Faith Community Nurses, Maureen Juarez and Jeanine Bruen, as part of the Caring Commission. They have their hands on the pulse of people in need in our church family. They are a wonderful extension of the church in identifying who needs help and how the Caring Commission can assist them. They love, care, support and encourage countless people in our church body.

Paulette Goodman has kept the kitchen ministry going for the past 20 years. We have been fortunate to have her and Bob at the helm of such an integral part of First Free. The kitchen tends to be the heart of our fellowship gatherings. Her crew of servers help to bring a piece of “family gathering” to our gym on Sunday mornings as we drink coffee and eat donuts. There is now a new crew of leaders taking over the kitchen duties. That group includes Mallory Hueckman, Beckah Waller, Courtney Hunter, Jenica Carlyon and Jill Rose. Phyllis Nordin and her serving crew help provide a comfortable place of reception and fellowship following funerals at First Free. The Living Life Community Group helped host the Thanksgiving Eve Pie Social this year. We had special fellowship times outside of our church walls this year including the Twin Cities Marathon, Minnehaha Park, and our baptism and church-family picnic at Triangle Park.

May God continue to bless First Free Church and the beautiful people in our church family. May we strive to “love one another” as God has called us to do.

Respectfully Submitted –

Carrie Boyum, Caring Commission Chair

OUTREACH COMMISSION

The Outreach Commission is blessed to support our 24 cross—cultural workers/ missionary units with prayer, and to determine and direct distribution of your offerings to them for financial support.

Ernest Manges, Bruce and Mary Damon, and Mark and Athlee Bowman retired from ReachGlobal, the EFCA mission unit, this fiscal year. Until Ernest's travel and training were curtailed by COVID, we continued to support him with a small amount. Funds for Damons were re-directed to Guy and Barb Hugo, to support their ministry to indigenous Canadians.

We are praying that your financial giving would continue, so we can slightly increase our giving to our missionaries. Several are in need, especially those who live and work in depressed areas of the world, and who share their funds with others for food, medicine, and shelter.

Those of you who reach out to our missionaries via the internet, through your prayer support, and by your financial gifts are greatly appreciated. If your Community Group or Small Group has not yet chosen a specific missionary unit to connect with, please consider doing so. These are challenging times across the world, and they gladly respond to emails of encouragement!!

Our Outreach Weekends give us the opportunity to interact face-to-face with our missionaries. October's weekend was well attended, when we heard from Phil and Cindy, Rachel Bliss, Bowmans, Damons, Fernandez's, and James Peterson with ReachGlobal. Although our plans for March were cancelled because of COVID, we hope to have leaders from Arrive Ministries with us in February or March 2021. If you have never attended an Outreach Weekend, we hope you can work it into your schedule!!

Most of the Outreach Committee members were able to attend MC2, the local Midwest Conference on Missionary Care. Phil and Cindy were also able to attend. We received insight on care for our missionaries.

Thank you for reaching out, through your Outreach Commission!

Because of Him –

Janet Poston, Chair

FINANCE AND PROPERTY BOARD

Our church building, dedicated at 52nd and Chicago, 68 years ago is really starting to show its age. Our Lord has been busy in the last fiscal year helping our board make many much-needed improvements and changes. I am forever blessed to lead the dedicated members of our board as we do His work.

This year we have been embarked on a general plan covering several projects as part of a capital improvements campaign.

We are looking to improve our building envelope, specifically the brickwork. The most critical concern being the south façade where there is a major outbreak of efflorescence, white stains and spalling on the brick. There are also sporadic areas around the building that have similar water damage. We'd like to get an assessment of the full extent of the problem this year.

The south building's roof because of its age is due for replacement. We have also experienced a water leak over the sanctuary and on the whole there is evidence of hail damage. We have obtained several estimates from roofing contractors which we are in the course of evaluating.

Our tired old gym floor has seen a lot of use. We hope that by the publication of this report a new and beautiful replacement, utilizing a pad and pour polyurethane system will be available for use. It promises to be the most versatile and most long lasting of all the options presented to us.

The 36 windows in the south building are in desperate need of replacement due to age, condition and inefficiency. We are exploring several styles and construction types to replace them.

The stain glass window over the main door is in need of renewal. We have found however its construction more complicated than first perceived requiring further investigation for a contractor up to the task.

We have concerns at the houses across the street as well. The center house, 5151 needs a new roof. We are presently evaluating estimates. We have decided to rebuild the garage at 5155. If stable it could be utilized in part for storage which we have great need of. 5147 had a cold problem in the basement space. It was resolved with dedicated work of Doug Nelson who insulated critical areas of the basement.

One of our talented church members has been busy painting several areas of the church. If you see him, don't get in his way or you too will be painted.

We are just completing upgrades in our three nursery rooms, 204 -206, with custom fabricated cabinets & countertops. A built-in dishwasher will later be installed after a right model choice is made.

As you have may have experienced, our parking lots has been renewed and new sufficient lighting has been added to the south lot. Bollards & chains along the ally were also installed to keep cars from using the lot for a short cut. This had become a common complaint by our neighbors.

In February, the lead pipe connected to the valve on our main water line at the curb had a catastrophic split resulting in a mini river along the curb. It required a replacement of the valve and a copper pipe to the city main. We are very thankful for Scott Beckett and Pete Lehner in expediting contractors to complete the repair in a very timely manner. A special appreciation goes to Scott who put in an extra effort to clean up the curb from the ice and mud left after the flood. He made it like it had never happened.

A new restaurant, called Heather's has taken over the southeast corner of 52nd avenue. Hopefully it will be better optics on that corner & good for neighborhood. With the exception of Sundays, we are allowing their customers, on a trial basis, use of the north row of our south parking lot.

We are presently updating the men's restroom across from the gym by installing new partitions.

We are also in the process of mitigating safety concerns with the down stairway adjacent to the main door.

As we continue to improve and maintain First Free properties I pray along with the rest of the board that our work is in agreement with God's blueprints.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles Sawyer, Finance and Property Board Chair

TREASURER

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

As of March 31, 2020

Looking back over the past year should fill all our hearts with gratitude—for the faithful and tireless service of this body and the generosity of givers! Some patterns in giving right now are different than our historic numbers; the online option is approximately 50% of our giving on a monthly basis and our two biggest months for giving are now March (largely due to the Terrace on Chicago Youth Fundraiser) and December. December remains our biggest month for contributions, however, this difference is less dramatic than in past years.

As a reminder.... the current budget year we had reduced the budget by 2.53% vs. the prior year.

On March 31st as we review the current budget year, we are in a solid position financially; almost \$25,000 ahead of plan. However, we know the pandemic has impacted families in our church and will ultimately affect what people are able to give. We head into the new fiscal year with this top of mind.

The numbers:

- We are ahead of our budget projection by \$24,816 at this point in the year.
- The average weekly income is \$19,927 which is (\$44) below the budgeted weekly income of \$19,972.
- The cash balance on hand for operations was \$88,274.

A few other key notes:

Personnel Expenses were under budget by \$13,498. We saved some money with the office manager transition and didn't hire some help for the youth ministry we had planned.

Several projects were completed around the church property this year including maintenance on the water main that was unplanned and painting/refresh of classrooms. Currently cabinets & counters in the nursery are being upgraded. We have also contracted for the removal and replacement of the gym floor which is happening while we aren't able to congregate. Property Reserves are being used for this project. The only outstanding debt we have is the church van loan with an outstanding balance of \$14,289 with the Richfield Bloomington Credit Union.

The budget being presented for the new fiscal year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 is a **3.58%** increase from the current budget year. We increased staff salaries 1.5% in the coming year (no increase in this year's budget) and bumped up the retirement contribution from 6% to 7%; with the end goal of increasing this to 10% in future budgets. The largest ministry increase is in Student Ministry (driven by 15-25% increase in participants & leaders) prior to the pandemic. We are restructuring the Children's Ministry Director position into two positions to include a part-time nursery coordinator. We also planned a 1.5% increase for the Outreach Budget. We are building in reserves for future building maintenance and capital improvements of \$15,000. Please know that the Finance Committee, Church Council and Church Staff recognize we may need to adjust the plan moving forward as we see the full impact the pandemic will have on our church budget and programming.

If there are any specific questions that you have about the church finances, please contact me or David Kriesel-Koll, Business Administrator.

Respectfully,

Julie Danielson, Treasurer

First Evangelical Free Church
Proposed 2020-2021
Budget
July 2020 through June 2021

	2019-2020	PROPOSED 2020-2021	Change From	% Change
	Annual Budget	Annual Budget	2019-2020 \$ Over Budget	
41100 · GENERAL	829,961.44	863,121.00		
41900 · MISSION / OUTREACH	166,303.00	168,800.00		
TOTAL INCOME	996,264.44	1,031,921.00		
Total 60009 · PERSONNEL	571,868.64	576,500.00	4,631.36	
Total 60059 · PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT	8,500.00	8,555.00	55.00	
Total 60079 · OTHER PERSONNEL EXPENSE	17,610.00	21,625.00	4,015.00	
Total 60001 · PERSONNEL RELATED EXPENSES	597,978.64	606,680.00	8,701.36	1.46%
Total 60158 · ADMINISTRATIVE	1,870.00	1,750.00	-120.00	
Total 60179 · OFFICE SERVICES	27,100.00	23,750.00	-3,350.00	
Total 60157 · ADMINISTRATIVE RELATED EXPENSES	28,970.00	25,500.00	-3,470.00	-11.98%
Total 60000 · PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATIVE	626,948.64	632,180.00	5,231.36	0.83%
Total 60311 · FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES	2,572.00	2,572.00	0.00	0.00%
Total 60309 · CARING COMMISSION	14,125.00	14,125.00	0.00	0.00%
Total 60359 · NURTURE - GENERAL	2,650.00	2,900.00	250.00	9.43%
Total 60339 · NURTURE - CREEKSIDE FRIENDS	30,730.00	29,800.00	-930.00	-3.03%
Total 60549 · NURTURE - STUDENT MINISTRY	17,450.00	26,450.00	9,000.00	51.58%
Total 60679 · WORSHIP COMMISSION	15,100.00	16,850.00	1,750.00	11.59%
Total 60308 · COMMISSIONS	82,627.00	92,697.00	10,070.00	12.19%
Total 60779 · BUILDING EXPENSE	77,702.00	93,900.00	16,198.00	
Total 61019 · UTILITIES	47,150.00	48,050.00	900.00	
Total 61069 · HOUSE - 5147 CHICAGO AVE	-3,570.00	-2,150.00	1,420.00	
Total 61119 · HOUSE - 5151 CHICAGO AVE	-7,170.00	-6,550.00	620.00	
Total 61179 · HOUSE - 5155 CHICAGO AVE	-4,070.00	-5,350.00	-1,280.00	
Total 61219 · SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS	850.00	850.00	0.00	
Total 61239 · VAN EXPENSE	8,743.80	8,744.00	0.20	
Total 61279 · SUNDRY	750.00	750.00	0.00	
Total 60778 · FINANCE & PROPERTY	120,385.80	138,244.00	17,858.20	14.83%
Total 70001 · EFCA AFFILIATIONS	13,200.00	15,400.00	2,200.00	
Total 70039 · EFCA MISSIONARIES	63,268.00	60,600.00	-2,668.00	
Total 70209 · NON - EFCA MISSIONAIRES	47,535.00	50,835.00	3,300.00	
Total 70389 · ORGANIZATIONS	12,200.00	9,625.00	-2,575.00	
Total 70479 · LOCAL OUTREACH MINISTRIES	9,900.00	10,700.00	800.00	
Total 70509 · OUTREACH INVOLVEMENT-PROMOTION	20,200.00	21,640.00	1,440.00	
Total 70000 · OUTREACH COMMISSION	166,303.00	168,800.00	2,497.00	1.50%
TOTAL EXPENSE	996,264.44	1,031,921.00	35,656.56	3.58%