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FIRST WORD

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Christ-Centered; Christ-Sent by Pastor Joel

Today as I am writing this article I am looking out the window of my office, watching a snowstorm taking place outside. Of the billions and billions of snowflakes in this one single storm, no one single flake is identical to another. Isn't that incredible? What an amazingly creative God we have.

Have you ever sat on a beach somewhere and watched a sunset? Again, no two sunsets are alike. God in His delight makes each one unique.

God doesn't mass produce His church either. Consider how much uniqueness is in just fifteen people who gather together in His name. How about a church of a hundred people? Or five hundred? Is it possible that the uniqueness of our church at First Free far outweighs the uniqueness of a snowstorm or a collection of sunsets?

The uniqueness I am referring to is not simply in the programs that we offer or in our worship style. It is our culture. It is what God has called us to be. It is our vision.

Jesus gave every Biblical church its mission when He said in Matthew 28, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

We uniquely restate it this way: First Evangelical Free Church's mission is to help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.

Each individual is important to God and to us.

We want to make disciples of Christ who are making disciples of Christ. And we want to do this all together, in community, as His church.

Our mission statement is like a compass, pointing us in the right direction. It directs us to Christ and to His mission. It waves an unmistakable evangelistic banner. It leads us to the lost.

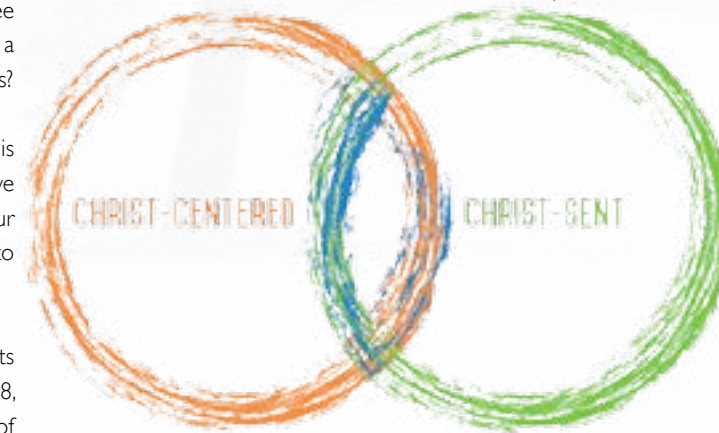
God is calling us to be an outpost - sending people out into the city for Christ; a signpost - pointing those in our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools to Christ; and a lamppost - shining the light of Christ throughout South Minneapolis and the world.

As we move in to this new year of 2014, we are launching our new vision with our new mission statement. We are going to be digging in during these first two months and discussing what this mission statement and vision really look like.

Eugene Peterson writes, "In the life of faith each person discovers all the elements of a unique and original adventure. We are prevented from following in one another's footsteps and are called to an

incomparable association with Christ. The Bible makes it clear that every time there is a story of faith, it is completely original. God's creative genius is endless."

We want to invite you to join us. What does this unique vision mean for me? What does it mean for us together as First Free?



THE TOP 10 REASONS TO SERVE IN THE NURSERY & 2'S ROOM

10. You have an empty lap
9. You love the smell of Play-Doh
8. You have a love of children's literature
7. You don't have to wear shoes
6. You enjoy watching little fingers grab Cheerios
5. You don't have to change diapers; the nursery coordinators do
4. You like to meet new people of all ages
3. You get stopped in the halls & get hugs from young ones who recognize you
2. You are able to watch children grow from birth to preschool
1. You like to share the love of Jesus



MORE INFO

www.firstfreechurch.org



We are blessed at First Free to have so many young families, a strong team of nursery coordinators, and wonderful adults & teenagers who serve in the nursery. There is a need for more caregivers...if you believe in the top ten list, you are encouraged to contact Beth Brown at beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org or Keri Graden at keri.graden@gmail.com



First Free's Mission - To help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.

UPCOMING @ First Free

VISION SERMON SERIES: CHRIST-CENTERED: CHRIST-SENT

- Jan. 5 – Where is God Taking Us?
- Jan. 12 – Worship Passionately
- Jan. 19 – Take in Scripture
- Jan. 26 – Praying Like it Matters
- Feb. 2 – Connected to Community
- Feb. 9 – Serving Others
- Feb. 16 – Giving Biblically
- Feb. 23 – Investing & Inviting:
Outreach Sunday
- Mar. 2 – The Math of Multiplication

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MEN'S SOULSHARE—SATURDAY, JAN. 11TH @ 9 A.M.

This month's Soulshare will be held on the 11th instead of the normal 3rd Saturday (the 18th). Men of all ages are welcome to join us every 3rd Saturday for breakfast and fellowship from now until May 2014. Contact Ross Olson with any questions: 612-824-7691.

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

First Free will be offering classes through Financial Peace University through Dave Ramsey. If you are interested in learning more, check out the **preview night on January 9th at 7:00 p.m.—this will also be the last opportunity to sign up for classes.** Classes will be every Thursday evening running for **9 weeks starting January 23rd.**



THE DEEP—WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22ND @ 6:30 P.M.

A refreshing time of worship and prayer. Come join us for a time of rest, enjoyment, and encounter God through worship and prayer. Childcare will be provided.

EXPRESSIONS—JANUARY 13TH & 27TH @ 7:00 P.M.

For those struggling with chronic or devastating disease, join us at 7:00 p.m. in room 103.

Church Family News

Eric & Sue Stabnow welcomed their son, Levi Eric Stabnow into their family on November 27th. He is 8lbs 4oz and 21 inches. Congratulations Stabnow family!

OUR DREAM

We envision First Free being a community of CHRIST-CENTERED and CHRIST-SENT

people in Minneapolis and beyond. We imagine being a lamppost, where the transforming light of JESUS CHRIST shines so brightly that the non-churched, once-churched, and badly-churched people of the Twin Cities discover their lifeless souls resurrected into the abundant life of Christ. We dream of people leaving our worship services shaking their heads in wonder because they just encountered JESUS in a personal and real way. We envision a church dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit, where people pray like it matters and live like it counts and where God's wisdom is not only taught, but lived out. We imagine a church where each person has discovered the joy of being in an authentic community and everyone has and is a "2 AM" friend.

We envision First Free being known for its compassion, a servant society that pours out its time and wealth for the common good of the city. We imagine First Free together being ... an Outpost, a people sent out for CHRIST; a Signpost, a people that point to CHRIST, and a Lamppost, a people that shine the light of CHRIST everywhere they go.

We dream of each person in the church engaged in ministry to others, where nobody is sitting on the sidelines and everybody is using their gifts to serve CHRIST and others. We envision First Free teaming up with other like-minded churches and together becoming a force for the gospel in the Twin Cities.



OUR STRATEGY: THE ROAD AHEAD *by: Jay Pound*

We want to be a church that helps individuals live Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.

The question now is, "How do we get there?" And that is a question of strategy, a request for a map that shows each person their next step. The picture you see here is our depiction of our strategy, a map helping individuals see where they are now and find the road ahead. Like a map, strategies are most helpful when they can be seen and remembered...and when they are accompanied by an explanation.

Our Strategy: Our strategy involves three different aspects we consider vital for living out our mission. We believe that each healthy, Christ-centered and Christ-sent disciple needs to be involved in corporate worship, authentic community and service.

The Shape: We chose a circle to communicate two things: 1) This is not a linear process, we don't move from one to the next as though the next is more "advanced." We believe all three are vital, and our desire is to see everyone involved in all three. 2) No one ever arrives or finishes, the way in which we are involved may change, but we do not ever "arrive."

The Center: We put a cross at the center to symbolize our desire for Christ to be at the center of everything we do. Service and community are both good things, but it is when we are serving Christ and in community with members of his family that it is transformative. And worship with anyone or anything else at the center is the definition of idolatry.

The Road Ahead: What this means in practice is that we want to challenge everyone who attends our church to join in all three. We would like each person to be in worship one hour a week. If they have another hour, we would like them to find a community group. And for their next hour, we would like them to find a place to serve. (Again, this can go in any order). We want everyone to find place to do all three.

So what does this mean for me? Well, it starts in you. Do you only join us for worship? Then take the next step and connect to a community group. Do you come to worship and are involved in a community group? Then find a place to serve. Do you join us in service? Then join us for worship. We want to challenge and help you, and everyone, to fill in the other pieces so that together we might all become healthy, Christ-centered and Christ-sent disciples and fulfill God's mission for our church.

