



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

JANUARY 2018

Looking Ahead



Save the date for our annual youth fundraiser dinner on March 10th! This gourmet dinner helps our students attend summer trips while giving you a fun, restaurant-like experience here at church.

Youth Group and Creekside Clubs resume Wednesday, January 10th at 6:30 p.m.

Parenting Matters: February 10th

A seminar to encourage and equip parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

Outreach Weekend: February 24-25

Join us as we hear from missionaries supported by First Free!

Working the Father's Blueprint

BY JOEL SUTTON

Have you noticed? It is much easier to make a case for a commitment to Christ than a commitment to the church. Christ is awesome, majestic, compelling. But the church seems so human, so ordinary and too many times downright dull. Christ is pure, the church is deeply and tragically stained.

In Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus, he lists three important opinions of the church: the angels', the Son's, and the Father's. The angels gasp at the church (Eph. 3:10), the Son loves the church (Eph. 5:25-27), and the Father planned the church (Eph. 3:10-11). Three overwhelming responses to the church from heaven.

Why? What is so special about the church?

The church provides people with things they cannot find anywhere else in the world: Worship helps us

focus on God; fellowship helps us face life's problems; discipleship helps us fortify our faith; ministry helps us find our talents; evangelism helps us fulfill our mission.

And when we do these things together we can be more than we are individually. So, as we move into 2018, what would God like us at First Free to do over the next seven years? What goals should we have? What is our vision?

This past September, after hours of prayer, interaction and discussion, our church leadership decided and confirmed that God wants us to do more than just sit here and occupy space at 51st and Chicago Ave. He wants us to take more territory in South Minneapolis and Richfield for Him. Even after 134 years of ministry, we feel that God is saying to us as a church, "You are not finished yet."

As we continue to help individuals

become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together, we envision by the year 2025, **Christ being first in 500 homes** throughout the 3-mile radius surrounding our church of South Minneapolis and Richfield.

We envision homes burning brightly with the light of Christ in their neighborhoods. Homes expressing a warmth and safety of Christ's love to their neighbors, recognizing and responding to the needs of others. Homes shining Christ's light penetrating the darkness and providing a beacon of hope to those hurting in the community around them. Homes filled with parents and children who have allowed God's story to shape them and are sharing that life-changing story with their neighbors. Homes that are lampposts shining the light of Christ in their neighborhoods.

We envision First Free being known for its radiating compassion, a

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CURRENT SERIES

**HIGH FIVE:
NEIGHBORING WELL**

JAN. 7	Who Is My Neighbor?	Luke 10:25-37
JAN. 14	How Is My Neighbor?	Luke 10:25-37
JAN. 21	How Do I Neighbor?	Luke 10:25-37

OUR MISSION:
TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER

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servant society that pours out its time and wealth for the common good of the city. We envision First Free teaming up with other like-minded churches in this three mile radius and together form a high-voltage power grid that illuminates the Twin Cities with the light of the gospel.

We envision First Free being a Christ-centered and Christ-sent people, a Lamppost, reaching out and inviting others into that same life transforming relationship with Christ.

Think about it: If we at First Free cause the angels to gasp . . . if we are sacrificially loved by the Son . . . if we are central to the Father plans, should we not also be working with His blueprint to make Christ known?

Serving Together

Here at First Free, we love to see people find community in small groups. We also love to see groups going out and serving their community together! We asked Jane Hershstein about what her small group does to serve.

How does your group serve together?

For the last two months and for the foreseeable future we volunteer the first Saturday of the month for evening creative snack at the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery. The crisis nursery shelters vulnerable kids (among other services for families in crisis) and provides them with meals, snacks, fun activities, and emotional/social support. The nursery has said they don't usually get a creative snack on weekends so it is a special treat for the kids.

How did you decide where to volunteer?

We brainstormed several ideas and when Emm Pensa brought up that she had done this with junior high girls, there was a unified "light" around the idea - good place for us to be a little salty!

How has having this shared mission impacted your group? What has been challenging? What has been positive?

What I see is a one big heart thing that is getting bigger. We know these little ones have some tough situations and then can see how just a smidgeon of GOD's love poured over them by way of a snack can be so sweetly received. And, it's not just the kids. The staff too! The positive part is that we are a group bound by a commitment and thankfully none of us take that lightly.

What advice would you give other groups considering a shared mission?

Go. Do. Some things you try as a group will make an impact, others won't seem to, and then one day, you'll walk into what is just right for your group. There is no shortage of need so being obedient to simply be available is a great first step!

If you are interested in joining a small group, contact Jay Pound or visit firstfreechurch.org/smallgroups. Ideas for where to serve can be found in our "Local Opportunities to Serve" brochure at the Welcome Desk.



Parenting Matters

February 10th, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

We believe that there is no one more important in the life of your kid or student than you as a parent, grandparent, or caregiver. Raising a child or teenager means more than providing for physical needs. It means playing a vital role in their emotional and spiritual development. Not only do you answer their questions, drive them to soccer practice, and help them with their homework, you are probably the most important example they have of what it looks like to follow Jesus. Most of them will learn to follow Jesus by following you. But none of that is a guarantee that you will have all the answers, especially in our swiftly changing world.

So with that in mind we are excited to present to you a morning filled with encouragement, education, and resources to help you parent well in our changing world.

This February, we're hosting a parenting seminar filled with TED-style 20 minute talks on issues that we believe matter to parents and caregivers. We will be covering a variety of topics such as understanding the different life stages of kids, helping kids begin to make their faith their own, and dealing with technology and kids. This event is part of our vision to equip parents to build Christ-first homes in the south Minneapolis area.

Join us from 8:30 until noon on February 10th, 2018. In addition to the talks, there will be a Q&A panel with the speakers and various resources for you to take home.

To register, please go to
firstfreechurch.org/parentingmatters
The cost is \$15.

Church Family News

We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Nancy Nichols, who passed away on November 2nd.

Congratulations to Sabina and Eddy Pierre Louis on the the birth of their son, Asher Pierre Louis, who was born on December 16th.

Congratulations to Wes & Risha Farrow on the the birth of their daughter, Valory Eden Farrow.

4 children were dedicated on November 12th. Amanda Kriesel-Koll & Nick Henry dedicated Evelyn Marie Henry and Colten Gerald Kriesel-Koll; Jessica & Matt Padget dedicated Jaela Jean Padget and Maelynn Maryann Padget.

This Month @ FIRST FREE

Women's Neighborhood Bible Study: Starting January 10

We are starting a new study on January 10th called Forgiveness: Making Peace with the Past. All women are invited to join us on Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00 a.m. Free childcare provided. Contact Dorothy Young at dorothy@youngjensen.com with questions.

Forgiveness, Making Peace with the Past: When we hurt the people we love, how do we go about restoring the relationship? When we suffer the pain of betrayal or injury or rejection from someone else, how do we deal with the anger and resentment we feel? This eight-week study leads the way to help you discover, understand and practice what the Bible says about forgiveness.

Men's Soul Search: January 20

Men: join us for breakfast, fellowship and discussion at 9:00 a.m. in room 105. Contact Ross Olson (ross@rossolson.org) for more information or to get on the email list.

The DEEP: January 24

Join us for a time of worship and prayer at The Deep on Wednesday, January 24th at 6:30 p.m. Childcare provided.

Together, A Gathering for Women: January 27

A place to connect, live out and grow in our faith together. Join us for a light brunch on Saturday, January 27th, 9:30-11:00 a.m. All First Free ladies age high school and above are welcome. RSVP at firstfreechurch.org/comingsoon.

Class 101: January 28

Interested in becoming a member at First Free? Check out our Class 101 to learn more about our church and what it means to be a First Free member. Join us January 28th at 4:00 p.m. Sign up online or contact the church office.