



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
5150 CHICAGO AVE S
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55417

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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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How God Became King BY JAY POUND

A few years ago now I taught a series of classes during an elective that I titled, "The Gospel according to the Gospels." It was one of my favorite series to teach. As usual, what made the series good was that I had the opportunity to share something that excited me, something I had been thinking about for a long time. At the heart of the series was the observation that often when we share the gospel, or even summarize it in our own minds, we most often think of passages from Romans (Romans 3:23, 6:23, etc.) or other Pauline letters. There is nothing wrong with this—God almost certainly recruited Paul to his service specifically because of his ability to unpack and explain what God had done in Christ.

But it is at least odd that when we think about the gospel our minds don't first go to one of the four books of the

New Testament that are actually called gospels. These four books, from the beginning, were copied, read, studied and passed down precisely as the documents that communicated the good news—the gospel—about Jesus. So what exactly is the good news of the gospels? What story do they tell, and what does it mean for us?

The temptation, now as always, is to simplify it or reduce it, or to chop it up into easily digestible pieces: Jesus' birth, Jesus' teaching, Jesus' miracles, etc. But it is hard not to notice that all four gospels tell one coherent story, albeit from four slightly different but corroborating points of view. All four insist that the gospel is the whole story, and that this story is in fact the climax and fulfillment of a much larger, much older story. And all four insist that while this story is primarily about Israel and her God, it is for everyone.

Starting on January 5th, we will be walking together through a study of the book of Matthew that will take us all the way up through Easter. We will explore the story about Jesus as recorded in Matthew from his birth at advent, all the way up through his ascension. That may seem like a long series (and it is), but it still means covering more than one chapter per week. So our goal as we walk through the series is to strike a balance: to always keep the shape of the whole story in view while zooming in on particular passages. We want to be able to dig deep on certain parts without losing sight of how they fit into the whole.

Our hope, as always, is that we would allow the words of scripture to shape us: how we understand the gospel, how we respond to its message, how we think, how we live. We want to hear the story as Matthew told it. We hope you will join us!



Dear First Free family,

Becky and I want to once again say thank you for the gracious send-off you gave to us. We will forever cherish the memories of the retirement brunch and the reception from this past Sunday and the personal notes.

Until we see you again,

Pastor Joel and Becky Sutton

Mental Health Presentation from NAMI



Sunday, January 12
9:00–10:00 a.m.
Church Gym

Created to Create

Tuesday, January 14
6:00pm – 8:00pm

In our next class, we will share God's love by making cards.

We will provide cards, envelopes, printed verses, a variety of papers, glue & stickers.

"God is LIGHT & in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). So let's chase back the darkness around us by sharing His love.

Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?
Contact the office at info@firstfreechurch.org

Our Mission:

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

FIRST FREE STAFF

JOEL SUTTON
SENIOR PASTOR
joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org

JAY POUND
ASSOCIATE PASTOR
jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org

PAUL ANLEITNER
WORSHIP PASTOR
paul.anleitner@firstfreechurch.org

EMMA DELISI
WORSHIP ASSOCIATE
emma.delisi@firstfreechurch.org

JAKE WEIKEL
STUDENT PASTOR
jake.weikel@firstfreechurch.org

DOUG NELSON
MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR
doug.nelson@firstfreechurch.org

CARRIE BOYUM
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR
carrie.boyum@firstfreechurch.org

STACEY URBANZ
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ASSOCIATE
stacey.urbanz@firstfreechurch.org

JEANINE BRUEN & ALLIE DANIELSON
FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES
nurses@firstfreechurch.org

SCOTT BECKETT
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN
scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org

JOANN BURNS
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
joann.burns@firstfreechurch.org

DAN FERGUS
TECH DIRECTOR/COMMUNICATIONS
dan.fergus@firstfreechurch.org

ELIANA NORDELL
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
ellie.nordell@firstfreechurch.org



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Thank you for celebrating with us at the *Creekside Advent Festival*



We're Here For You

Are you in need of finding community resources to help you or your loved ones? Our Faith Community Nurse ministry would be happy to assist with finding resources in the community related to healthcare, mental health, housing, food, and/or finances.

Please contact nurses@firstfreechurch.org for more information.

WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP

By Paul Anleitner

Associate Pastor

For the last several years, our worship ministry has been focused on giving opportunities to new leaders who can continue to carry out the things God has called us to in worship at First Free, and I'm excited for our two leaders stepping into increased positions of leadership in 2025.

Emma Delisi grew up at First Free and spent years singing on the worship team before heading off to college. When Emma would come back to visit during those years, I noticed that God had been doing something in her heart. Discerning that vocational ministry may be in her future, we invited her to do an internship in the worship ministry when she graduated from college.

Since that time, Emma has gone from our Worship Intern to Worship Associate, and now, to our Worship Director. Beyond her amazing vocal abilities and ability leading songs, Emma is a great leader of our teams, bringing fresh ideas, and caring communication skills to everyone who serves alongside her. I look forward to continuing to partner with her in the planning of our worship services and the ongoing development of other up-and-coming leaders.

Partnering with Emma in the leading of our music is Noah Neumann, our new Music Director. Noah began playing guitar with me over 10 years ago, helping me lead worship conferences and church services in multiple different church contexts. Noah is one of the most brilliant musicians I've ever been around and carries a deep love for our church. Noah has been a paid-musician for some of the biggest churches in the Twin Cities, and plays in one of Minnesota's most popular bluegrass/americana bands called Maygen and the Birdwatcher. He loves the culture of worship at our church and brings so much musical creativity and experience to our music at First Free.

Emma and Noah have worked together closely throughout this year, especially during my summer sabbatical. Seeing how each of their strengths compliment each other in the leading of our ministry makes me incredibly excited for the future of the worship ministry at First Free.



A Note from Emma Delisi

Worship Director

I have been blessed to be a part of First Free for many years now. I am so thankful that I continue to call this church my home and that I have had numerous opportunities to serve in various leadership roles within the Worship Ministry over the past number of years.

The group of volunteers, who encompass so many different areas of our worship ministries here at First Free, give our community and church body such a diverse and unique opportunity to connect, refresh, and grow in our faith together. I am blessed to work alongside each and every one of these individuals who support these ministries in our church. I feel honored to be placed in the Worship Director role. I look forward to serving our church, community, and God through worship alongside each of you.

A Note from Noah Neumann

Music Director

I'm so happy for this opportunity to introduce myself to the congregation! You've probably seen me (and my hats) from time to time on the stage. My name is Noah and live in St. Paul with my wife, Molly, and our daughter, Ramona.

I've work in Special Education at a charter school in Minneapolis as well work in a touring band. My family has called First Free home for the better part of two years now. A fun fact about me is that I am a major bird nerd. So feel free to chat me up about the comings and goings of your backyard birds!



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Our condolences to the family of Jim Rask who passed away on January 2nd at the age of 82. His funeral will be at First Free on January 20 at 10:30 a.m., reviewal at 9:30 a.m. There will be a lunch to follow.