



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

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On Mission In Exile BY PAUL ANLEITNER

Many generations had passed since the old glory days of King David. Jerusalem had been sacked by the Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar. The bodies of the dead Israelites were stacked and burned in the Valley of Hinnom. This was the same place that previous wayward kings of Israel (or more specifically the kings of southern kingdom of Judah) allowed God's people to sacrifice their own children by fire to the false god Molech. Interestingly enough, when we read Jesus in the Gospels and he talks about "hell", in nearly every case the Gospel authors use the Greek word "Gehenna" which means "Valley of Hinnom."

So In 586 B.C., the remaining survivors of this vicious onslaught who did not end up in this "hell" were hauled off into captivity in the city-state of Babylon. This was a historic crisis for the covenant people of God. What were they to do now? What was God's game plan for his people while they were in exile?

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce...seek the welfare of the city

where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."
Jeremiah 29:4-5,7

What a seemingly odd command. Babylon is a wicked empire, shouldn't God's people attempt to defeat it through violence and war the same way the Babylonians defeated them? Or perhaps they should at least protest and picket on the streets to try and win a culture war? That probably makes a lot of strategic sense. But to seek it's good, to work to see the city be blessed? This is your strategy, God?

Yes, and this has actually always been God's strategy for His people. From Abraham, who was was blessed so that "all the nations of the earth [would] be blessed," (Gen. 22:18) to Israel who was to be a nation of priests mediating God's goodness and his vision for creation to the world around them (Exodus 19:5-6), to the ultimate embodiment of this in Jesus whose entire mission, death, and resurrection was done because "God so loved the world." (John 3:16)

The religious landscape of America, Minnesota, and likely your own neighborhood has shifted over the past 50 years. Perhaps some of you

who have lived through this cultural shift feel more and more as if Christians are in exile. What should be our mission now?

Perhaps God's mission for us today isn't all that different from his strategy for the Jewish people in Babylonian exile. What if instead of fighting a failed culture war, we embraced a call to be faithful sojourners in cultural exile? What if we worked to see the flourishing of our city without any conditional demands that people must first hold to the same beliefs as we do before we blessed them?

So frequently we may think that if we can't, in a sense, "seal the deal" and get people to an explicit profession of faith or to come to church with us that we're somehow failing, but "salvation belongs to our God." (Rev. 7:10) You don't have to save the world, but you can bless it by simply seeking to see your neighbors, coworkers, friends and family be blessed and flourish.



UPCOMING SERIES | NEIGHBORING 12:31—A MINNEAPOLIS MISSIONS TRIP, AUGUST 8-11, 2019



MARKETFEST!

JUNE 26TH, 6-8 PM WITH THE NOKOMIS FARMERS MARKET

Farmers market, food trucks, inflatables, spin art, music, free hot dogs for kids 12 & under, and more!

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

WANT MORE INFO?

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SEE MORE INFO AT:
www.firstfreechurch.org

Neighboring 12:31

A MINNEAPOLIS MISSIONS TRIP

WHAT IS NEIGHBORING 12:31?

Neighboring 12:31 is a local, neighborhood mission trip in the city of Minneapolis and surrounding cities through First Free Church. We will have a specific focus on reaching out to our neighbors, which is where the name stems from - Mark 12:31 - "...Love your neighbor as yourself..."

WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS?

Your neighbors are those living next door, across the street, and behind you. And, your neighbors are anyone with whom you have, or are developing a relationship, whether that's a co-worker, boss, teacher, family member, friend, teammate, coach, or an organization you frequent or support.

WHAT WILL WE BE DOING?

First Free attendees will submit opportunities to be on mission to serve and support each other's neighbors, and any needs within our church body. We will rally to complete the projects and engage with others to strengthen the relationships being cultivated, so even when the team is done completing the project(s), the church attendee still has the relationship they will foster and grow. We'll spend time getting to know one another better on the trip, too!

WHEN IS NEIGHBORING 12:31?

Thursday, August 8 @ 6:00 - 8:00PM
Friday, August 9 @ 6:00 - 8:30PM
Saturday, August 10 @ 9:00AM - 8:00PM
Sunday, August 11 @ 10:00AM: Celebration and testimonies during the church service.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Everyone!! - seniors, adults, teens, and kids -- there will be opportunities for different interests, and skill levels, whether you're an experienced missionary or a beginner with a heart to serve. We will also have childcare available from 10:00AM - 1:00PM and 2:00PM - 5:00PM on Saturday, August 10 for those who would like to leave their young children in loving hands as they engage in the community.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Only \$15 per person (max \$75 per family). This includes your meals and helps pay for supplies we will need to complete some of the opportunities. We don't want finances to stop you from participating, so if you aren't able to pay, please talk with Pastor Jay. Sign-up information will be available soon!

Church Family News

- Congratulations to Katie and Nate Pattee on the birth of their son Calum Richard Pattee born on Wednesday, May 8th!
- Congratulations to Danah and DJ O'Neil on the birth of their daughter Beatrice June O'Neil born Friday, May 10th!

Dominican Republic Missions Trip

MAY 5th-11th

The team expresses our thanks for your prayers, support, and funding for 25 mattresses which provides work for a local Dominican business and a better night's sleep for teams serving with Kids Alive.

We were assigned two tasks. One was to break ground for a new shop/tool building as the current space will be converted into additional classrooms. The second was to paint a mural on a wall inside the yellow ARC home which houses eleven children and two parents. Thanks to a good plan and some hard work, the building project is two weeks ahead of schedule.

An additional task the parish nurses provided for us was an outreach to seniors needing glasses. A gospel message was given and it was a joy to see how happy these folks were to be able to see. Thank you to everyone who donated prescription glasses, your thoughtfulness became a blessing.

-Cheryl Pollard

THE TEAM: John Cain, Julie Danielson, Wayne Danielson, Bob Goodman, Shelbi Hayenga, Felix Juarez, David Kriesel-Koll, Diane Laitinen, Cheryl Pollard, Jim Pollard, Matthew Pollard, Mark Poston, John Symington



This Summer @ FIRST FREE

JUNE 9TH 11:30 A.M. VBC TRAINING

VBC Volunteer training is on Sunday June 9th, all volunteers should plan on attending, a light lunch is provided.

JUNE 26TH 6:00-8:00 P.M. MARKETFEST

We are partnering with the Nokomis Farmers Market to put on this outdoor community event on Wednesday, June 26th, 6:00-8:00 p.m. All are invited! Enjoy the farmers market, food trucks, inflatables, and more with our church family and our neighbors!

JULY 28TH 10:30 A.M. WORSHIP AT MINNEHAHA FALLS

Join us for worship at Minnehaha Falls on Sunday, July 28th at 10:30 a.m.