



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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Lent: Your Calendar is Your Story BY PAUL ANLEITNER

In October of 1793, at the height of revolutionary fervor during the French Revolution, the new political party that had come to power sought to reorient the lives of the French people around a new story- a story that rejected all associations with France's history of kings and Christianity. These revolutionaries were known as the Jacobins and their biggest ideological goal was to build a new France with new "enlightened" ideals and values. How would they set out to do this? How could you possibly get people to live in an entirely different story and embrace an entirely different set of values from their past?

Among a long list of radical legislative and cultural changes, the Jacobins attempted an interesting strategy to change the story the French people saw themselves living within.

They instituted a brand new calendar.

This new calendar removed all of the past Christian holidays and even changed from a seven-day week to a ten-day week so that there wouldn't be a Christian day of worship and rest to mark the beginning of the week.

While the Jacobins' "Republican Calendar" failed after a tumultuous twelve-year run of going against the grain of God's design, they rightly understood the power of the calendar in shaping people's lives. If you can change how people mark their days and keep track of time, you can change the story that they live in.

While I grew up in an Evangelical context, I didn't grow up with any knowledge of the historic "Christian year" or Church calendar with its orientation of time around the Christian story. We celebrated Christmas and Easter like most Americans, but we didn't do Advent or Lent. In fact, we were more apt to celebrate American civic holidays like the Fourth of July on a Sunday morning than anything from the rich traditions of our Christian heritage.

But later in my adult years, as I was exposed to devoted followers of Jesus outside of my particular tribe, I began to notice how they seemed to be living out their days inside a slightly different story from me. Easter Sunday wasn't just a Sunday morning where everyone got dressed up a little bit nicer and had an Easter egg hunt after service, it was a

climatic celebration that their whole year seemed to be centered around.

As I learned more about historic Christian seasons like Lent, I decided to give it a try one year. I fasted over the five-week period and read the Scripture passages from the Lectionary for each of those weeks. When Holy Week came (which starts with Palm Sunday and goes through Good Friday and Holy Saturday), I felt a palpable sense of hunger and excitement for the Resurrection. It felt as if I had stepped within the pages of some compelling drama and that I was inching closer to the story's climatic resolution. It helped that I wasn't doing this on my own either. I was in a church that was also practicing the rhythms of the Lenten season each week in worship.

We talk a lot at First Free about being Christ-centered, and one of the most helpful things you can do to feel your life get reoriented around the story of Jesus is to change the way you mark your days. Step into the rhythms of Lent this year and feel how much sweeter Good Friday and Easter become.

BAPTISM

BAPTISM CLASS
SUNDAY, MARCH 10 @ 9 A.M.

On Easter Sunday, we will be celebrating baptism!
If you would like to be baptized or learn more about baptism, please register to attend the baptism class →



Palm Sunday

MARCH 24

.....

9:00 a.m. Community Hour

10:30 a.m. Worship Service



Good Friday

MARCH 29

.....

7:00 p.m. Friday Service



Easter Sunday

MARCH 31

.....

9:00 a.m. Worship & Baptism

10:30 a.m. Worship & Baptism



Our Mission:

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

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Expressions

The Expressions support group is similar to other small groups at First Free. It is a place where people "do life" together: supporting and encouraging each other, praying for each other, serving, and seeking Biblical wisdom together. However, membership in this group is dedicated to people dealing with chronic illnesses ranging from ongoing diseases to mental illness, such as chronic depression and anxiety.

We meet for two hours twice a month during the school year and monthly during the summer. Our meetings include a short devotional prepared on a rotating basis by Expressions members.

We set goals for the weeks between meetings and review them at our meeting and then reset our goals. In order to express our deepest needs (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) we participate in an art project that helps us express our needs. Creativity is a big part of this support group. The art is a wordless expression of feelings or thoughts, not about making something beautiful—no experience with art is necessary, and stick figures are welcome! Using art is one way to foster talking about difficult things and often generates delightful observations and discussions.

Two of our members had difficulty attending church due to anxiety. They have been able to return to church services and other activities at church.

Expressions generally meets twice monthly on Sunday afternoons 2:30-4:30 PM. All art materials are provided, and there is no cost to attend. It is led by Dee Huanca and Gayle Gilman.

If you are interested in joining, please talk to one of the Faith Community Nurses (nurses@firstfree.org) or Delores Huanca (ddhuanca@msn.com).



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Congratulations to Hope and Sawyer Henderson on the birth of their son Noah John Henderson on February 12! Proud grandparents are Pastor Joel and Becky Sutton.
- Our condolences to the family of Melvin (Mel) Swanson who passed away at the age of 92 on February 13.
- Our condolences to the family of Anne Johnson who passed away at the age of 94 on January 31.
- Our condolences to the family of Judy Murphy who passed away at the age of 76 on February 24. Judy is the mother of Deb Olson.

♥ SERVE DAY ♥

120
VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER AGES
RANGED FROM

4-82

50
DRESSERS
BUILT

Outreach Saturday

In addition to the numbers above, volunteers donated 60+ pillows and linen items, created piles of cheerful "Welcome Home" cards that were artfully created and placed in each dresser, and were powered by lots of coffee and teamwork!

Bridging, our non-profit partner, will distribute these items to families; they predict all items will be gone in about one week.

Thank you, volunteers and donors, for forcefully answering God's call to DO GOOD!

— Kim and Jon Sorensen (on behalf of the Outreach Commission)



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