



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
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# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

MAY 2023

## *You Become What You Behold* BY PAUL ANLEITNER

As many of you might know, I grew up in one of the blue-collar neighborhoods of suburban Detroit. As is the case in many blue-collar towns, sports were a big part of life. Living in Detroit, it would seem like it should be hard to root for our hometown Detroit Lions football team as they appeared, to many an observer, to be under some strange curse and destined to the fate of being perpetual losers. And yet somehow, they always sold out the 80,000-seat capacity Silverdome where the Lions played their home games. For some peculiar reason, while knowing in my head that they would likely never win the Super Bowl, I still found my heart loving the Honolulu blue and silver "Motor City Kitties."

But why? By all accounts, just about anything else would be a more worthwhile endeavor to give my time and attention to. It wasn't until several years after moving to the Twin Cities that I realized the answer.

The epiphany dawned on me while I was watching the Minnesota Vikings in the 2009 NFC championship game. I, a purported Lions fan, caught myself in the 4th quarter of that game jumping out of my couch cheering when the Vikings scored, yelling at the television over bad calls against the Vikings like some deranged maniac, and acting just like millions of other Vikings fans were that night. That's when it hit me. "Oh no. I've become a Vikings fan. How did that happen?!"

The truth was that I had become a Vikings fan the same way I had become a Lions fan as a child- through the

regular, habitual ritual of giving them my attention each week. I realized that for the last few years, I had been setting aside a few hours every autumn Sunday to watch them play. When I turned on sports talk radio in the car, I was listening to the local talking heads break down Vikings games, not Lions games. When I talked with people at work or church about sports, they were talking about the Vikings. What I had regularly given my attention to had changed my affections.

In our evangelical contexts, we may instantly associate the word worship with music and singing, but a more appropriate word to associate with worship is attention.

Attention is a fixed resource, and as paradoxical as this may sound, where we allocate our attention is both a sign of what we see as valuable and it shapes what we love and value. People become devoted fans of sports teams, movie stars, or YouTube and TikTok influencers through the regular practice of setting aside their valuable attention and then expressing some form of adoration. People develop an affection for things like exercise, gardening, or cooking by simply setting aside time regularly to exercise, work in their garden, or cook. Can't imagine ever enjoying working out? Just commit to doing it regularly in the company of others who enjoy it, and chances are that if you do that for 90 days, you'll find that you've actually started to enjoy working out.

Our waking attention is always going somewhere, and in an age of endless

attention traps, if we are not intentional about where and how we allocate our attention, we will find our affections unconsciously being shaped by forces that may not be for our good.

This is why it is so crucial to practice setting aside a portion of the first day of our week to gather together and give our fully-devoted attention to God in worship. Just like how I found myself becoming a Vikings fan after years of setting aside a portion of my Sundays to give them my attention, you will find your affections turned more towards Christ by habitually giving him your attention and adoration in worship each week. This is a foundational Christian practice, and yet we still must ask ourselves, "How much transformation will one hour of worshipping in community produce if, throughout the rest of our week, our attention is consumed with cable news, political talk radio or YouTubers, social media "doom-scrolling", and Netflix?"

This question isn't intended to denigrate responsible civic engagement, engaging with works of art in culture, or the practices of simple rest and leisure, but each of these areas that we may give our attention to can become idols when they are not subordinated beneath the Lordship of Christ and employed for his purposes. When that happens, our lives become increasingly dysfunctional and damaging to those around us. So how do we keep that from happening?

*Continued Inside*



**SIGN UP FOR VBC!**

**JUNE 19-23  
9AM-12PM**



SCAN HERE  
to sign up



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

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**VISIT US ONLINE**

www.firstfreechurch.org



**SOCIAL MEDIA**

youtube.com/firstfreetv  
facebook.com/firstfreechurch  
instagram.com/firstfreechurchmpls

**SUMMER SCHEDULE**

**One Service beginning May 28th at 10:00 a.m.**

Children's Church through June

**Summer Picnics**

- May 21st Ascension Sunday Kite Flying at Todd Park
- June 25th at Triangle Park
- July 30th and Baptism at Lake Nokomis
- August 27th at Triangle Park



*Continued from cover*

While worship each week is intended to re-orient our "values compass" towards the true Northstar of Christ and the values of the Kingdom of God, we also need daily practices to help refocus our attention towards Christ and turn our attention away from the attention traps that would make us less Christ-like.

Need ideas on how to incorporate regular rhythms and practices for fixing your attention on Christ and allowing him to change your affections? Grab a free copy of our Extraordinary Norms: Practices and Resources for Building a Christ-Centered & Christ-Sent Community booklet at the welcome booth or main office, or reach out to one of our pastors for advice. We'd love to help you!

**CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

- Our condolences to the family of Janet Shellman who passed away at the age of 84.
- Our condolences to the family of Lois Chapman who passed away at the age of 95. Memorial service will be on Friday, June 9th at 11:00 a.m. with visitation at 10:00 a.m., at First Free. A light luncheon will follow.
- Congratulations to our graduating seniors! Adela Bragg, Coco Barber, Elin Ekstrom, Krislynn Longfield, Elenore Gossard, Rachel Larson, Ruth Stacey, Carter Anderson, Liam Beckett, Marcus Ernst, Rohan Burns, Ryan McWilliams. Join us for Grad Night on May 17th at 7:00 p.m.

**EASTER SUNDAY BAPTISM**

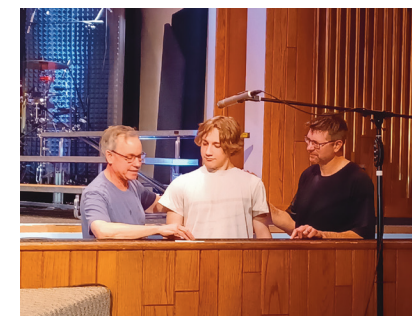
Baptism is and always has been one of the great signposts of the Christian faith. Baptism points first and foremost to Jesus as the crucified, buried and risen King. When we are baptized, we are visibly, publicly, and concretely aligning ourselves with Jesus, that he is in fact our King. Baptism points to the church as the new Jew + Gentile people of God, reconciled to God and each other through Jesus. Whatever our background, our language or culture, whether

circumcised or uncircumcised, baptism declares our membership in God's family through the Messiah. And of course baptism also points toward the resurrection and new creation, celebrating not only the victory of Jesus over death, but anticipating that great and glorious day when all creation will be made new, us included.

We are grateful for the opportunity we had this past Resurrection Sunday to celebrate the baptism of 18 people across our two services!

What a great way to celebrate the resurrection, and what a wonderful way to point toward the good news about Jesus, his church, and our hope for all creation. If you have not yet had a chance to share in that celebration, I would encourage you to look for the videos on our church Youtube channel. If you would like to talk more about baptism, contact the church office or any of the church staff.

*-Jay Pound*



**ANNUAL CELEBRATION**  
(+BUSINESS MEETING)  
**SUNDAY, MAY 21 @ 10:30 A.M.**  
ANNUAL BUDGET FORUM MAY 13TH 10:00 A.M. VIA ZOOM

*Child Dedication*  
**SUNDAY, MAY 14**

Contact the church office if interested

Aaliyah Peterson

Audrey Sollie

Mark Poston

Luba Fager

Evie Pound

Karen Manos

Karen Manos

