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First Word

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Faith in Uncertain Times BY JAY POUND

“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6.13)

If all you know about Gideon is that he was the man that (bravely?) led 300 men into battle against thousands of foes, you are missing a large part of the picture. Yes, at the climactic battle, Gideon does demonstrate great faith, but he needed a lot of help to get there. In fact, when we first meet Gideon in Judges 6, he seems singularly unimpressed with the way God is running things. When an angel of the Lord first greets him, “the Lord is with you mighty warrior,” Gideon responds sourly, asking, “If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?” (Jud. 6.12-13).

In Gideon’s defense, I imagine that in his position, most of us would have shared his thoughts, even if we might not have voiced them - directly to the angel of the Lord. God had in fact handed Israel over to the Midianites for seven years (6.1). Now God had his reasons: he did it in a drastic attempt to prompt his people to turn from their idolatry and return

to him. But seven years is a long time, and I suspect Gideon was not the only one to question what God was doing. And at the root of that doubt was uncertainty. God knows he has a plan, and that it is good, but Gideon did not.

Most of us don’t like uncertainty - at least not in the things that really matter. When it comes to issues like life, health, income, etc., what we want is a clear plan that can be easily understood. Like Gideon, we are willing to trust God, so long as he lets us in on what he is planning. But if we only trust God when we know, understand and approve of his plan, is our trust actually in God - or is it in ourselves? Are we living by faith, or just enjoying a stretch of time where God’s plan conveniently overlaps with our own?

Uncertain times - like our own - can be difficult and challenging. Like Gideon, we may find ourselves wondering why God would be allowing these things to happen. But uncertain times also bring clarity. When our plans go off the rails, or just plain fail, we can see clearly if our trust has been in God or only in ourselves.

That might be scary, but it might also be a time where our faith in God will grow deeper as we learn to surrender our own plans and agendas.

We just started a new sermon series titled, “Faith in Uncertain Times,” both because we understand the challenges that many are now facing, but also because we understand the opportunity this time offers for growth. Some of us have had our plans derailed, or at least put on hold, and we have all been reminded that we are not actually in control. But the good news is that God is in control - and his plan is better anyway. Join us as we study God’s word together so that we might know and trust him more.

Stay up to date with these links:

Velocity Students:
firstfreechurch.org/students

Creekside Friends:
firstfreechurch.org/children

Watch Sunday Sermons:
firstfreechurch.org/sermons
OR [firstfreetv](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) on YouTube

Welcome Carrie Boyum!

We are excited to announce Carrie Boyum as our new Children’s Ministry Director!

The personnel committee is thrilled that Carrie Boyum will be stepping in as our new Children’s Ministry Director. Carrie has a great heart and desire for children and people of all ages to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Carrie brings years of volunteer church ministry and administrative experience. Most recently she has been serving on the Vacation Bible Camp leadership team and as our Caring Commission Chairperson. Carrie is married to Jon and together they have three children, Christina (16), Collin (14) and Garrett (11).



(Because of the current circumstances with Covid-19, we will have a BIG thank-you for Beth Brown, who has been our Children’s Ministry Director for over 16 years, at a later day when we can all gather).

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& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER
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SEE MORE INFO AT:
www.firstfreechurch.org

Serving in Uncertain Times

STEVE & KATIE KLENK

We had just started talking about how we could help with a food shelf that was happening at Normandale Community College where our son Elliot attends when school was cancelled due to Covid 19. We thought we would continue our prompting by the Holy Spirit by collecting and donating to Community Emergency Services. We contacted the Conrad's who lead our Faithbuilders Community Group at church and they were all for it. We set up a donation station in our back yard with a few other ways to donate that abided by social distancing. We decided to include our neighbors as well and went door to door to check in with them and to tell them about our food drive (staying 6 feet away of course). Since we anticipated we would not see each person as they donated, we included a bible verse on the table where we instructed people to leave the donations. The verse was Numbers 6:24-26. People started commenting on the verse, and one neighbor was truly comforted it. She was not familiar with bible verses, but she was comforted by it during a period of grief. God's word is alive and active in our little neighborhood!

We already delivered one van full of over 40 bags of food thanks to the giving hearts of our church and neighbors. We have decided to continue collecting donations with a new list CES needs and distributed it to more community groups through the Caring Commission. We encourage people to reach out to their neighbors, praying for them, comforting them and giving them an opportunity to give to others, which makes us all blessed!



Watch for details on "Staycation Bible Camp."

We are working on a way to bring VBC to you. For the latest information about VBC please go to firstfreechurch.org/vbc

Serving in Uncertain Times

THE LARSONS

I have been 3D printing face shields for about 3-4 weeks now. My small 3D printer farm has been churning about 15-30 face shields per day. I have made close to 450 face shields to date. The face shields have been sent to Abbott Northwestern Hospital and some to Elim Care Nursing Home. The decision to make face shields was not a difficult one for me. I had the capacity to do this and I have 2 nurses in my family that have been directly impacted by this pandemic (Amy, my daughter, was sent to the Covid unit to care for patients there). With the peak still likely in front of us I wanted to help make sure that the staff caring for people have PPE available.

I have recently been practicing a spiritual habit of asking "OK God what do you have for me here?" These kinds of prayers over time begin to expose something special about prayer. That prayer is not monologue, it is conversation. Recently I have sensed that God has started to respond back to me with "OK Keith what do you have for me here?" Also, I have the sense that I am cooperating with what God was already doing. Small details such as supplies showing up in unusual ways. Contacts and needs all of the sudden appearing. Timing of some of the details of this project has either been a huge coincidence or something that God was already working out before I joined him.

I have to say the whole project has been quite fun both because it involves something I enjoy very much and because of this feeling that I am cooperating in something God is doing. It is never far from mind however that these shields are going to the place where these clinical visits are happening. What I am doing is quite small when compared to the people who are walking into these rooms to care for the people who are infected with this virus. The sense that God is working has brought comfort to some stressful shifts for so many health care workers and others on the front lines of this battle. Psalm 91 has found a special place for our family and God has brought that text specifically and the truth of it in so many ways over the past weeks that He is in control and worthy of our trust. I sure appreciate your prayers for my family and all those who are working on the front lines.



Faith Community Nursing News

Cloth Mask Distribution

Women from First Free have been making cotton reusable masks for the congregation. They will be distributed by Cathy Todd in the alley by her garage at the following address, 3417 Park Ave S. Masks will be available on Thursdays from 5-7 PM on May 14 and 21 and on Sundays from 10-12 on May 3, 10, and 17. Enter the alley between Columbus and Park Avenues and pick out the masks of your choice! Donations to the FCN ministry of First Free Church are greatly appreciated. If you need masks delivered to your home, please call the church, or indicate this on the firstfreechurch.org website.

Connecting With One Another

The Seniors are busy calling one another. Dorothy Young and Phyllis Nordin make sure that every Senior gets a call from someone else each week and that they are OK. Some families are sending cards to members of First Free. If you are interested in sending cards or calling others, please let the Faith Community Nurses know and they can give you names and addresses.

Blood Drive Cancelled

The Red Cross Blood Drive at First Free for May 4 has been cancelled but blood is greatly needed. Call 1-800-733-2767 to make an appointment to donate at the Red Cross Blood Donation Center.