



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
NOVEMBER 2024

Paying it Forward BY JOEL SUTTON

In October 2000 a movie came out by the name of “Pay it Forward.” It was the story of a social studies teacher who gives an assignment to his junior high school class to think of an idea to change the world for the better, then put it into action.

One young student creates a plan for “paying forward” favors. To pay it forward basically means when someone does something for you, instead of paying that person back directly you pass it on to another person.

When this student “pays it forward,” not only does it affect the life of his struggling single mother, but he sets in motion an unprecedented wave of human kindness which, unbeknownst to him, blossoms into a profound national phenomenon.

It was a wonderful, feel good movie. But this now popular concept didn’t begin with a movie, but with Jesus. One of the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples as he was about to send them out on mission was simply, “Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:8). That instruction was remarkably revolutionary.

In Jesus’ day, the Roman empire was largely based off a different system; a system of

patronage. A giver (or patron) who had more would give a “gift” with strings attached to a receiver. The expression in that world was, “I give so that you will give to me.” It put the receiver, who was usually of a lower class, automatically under obligation.

Because the person who received the gift couldn’t financially pay the patron back, they would be expected to give service or time to the patron. Often times, the system was used in the pursuit of honor. The benefactor expected his clients to form an entourage, blow trumpets and shout out his praises as he passed through the streets of Rome. It was a “circle of reciprocity.”

But Jesus breaks this circle of reciprocity. Since God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, we owe our thanks to Him. My gratitude goes not to some person who needs to be propped up, but back to God. And one of the ways we show our gratitude to the God who gives us all good gifts is to give to those in need without any strings attached—freely.

I give to the least of these because God created them and loves them. And we are to be generous in secret. Jesus said in Matthew 6:2, “When you give to the needy, do not announce

it with trumpets as the hypocrites do... to be honored by men.” So instead of our human interaction being built around propping up those who have power and status, we are to pay God’s generosity forward.

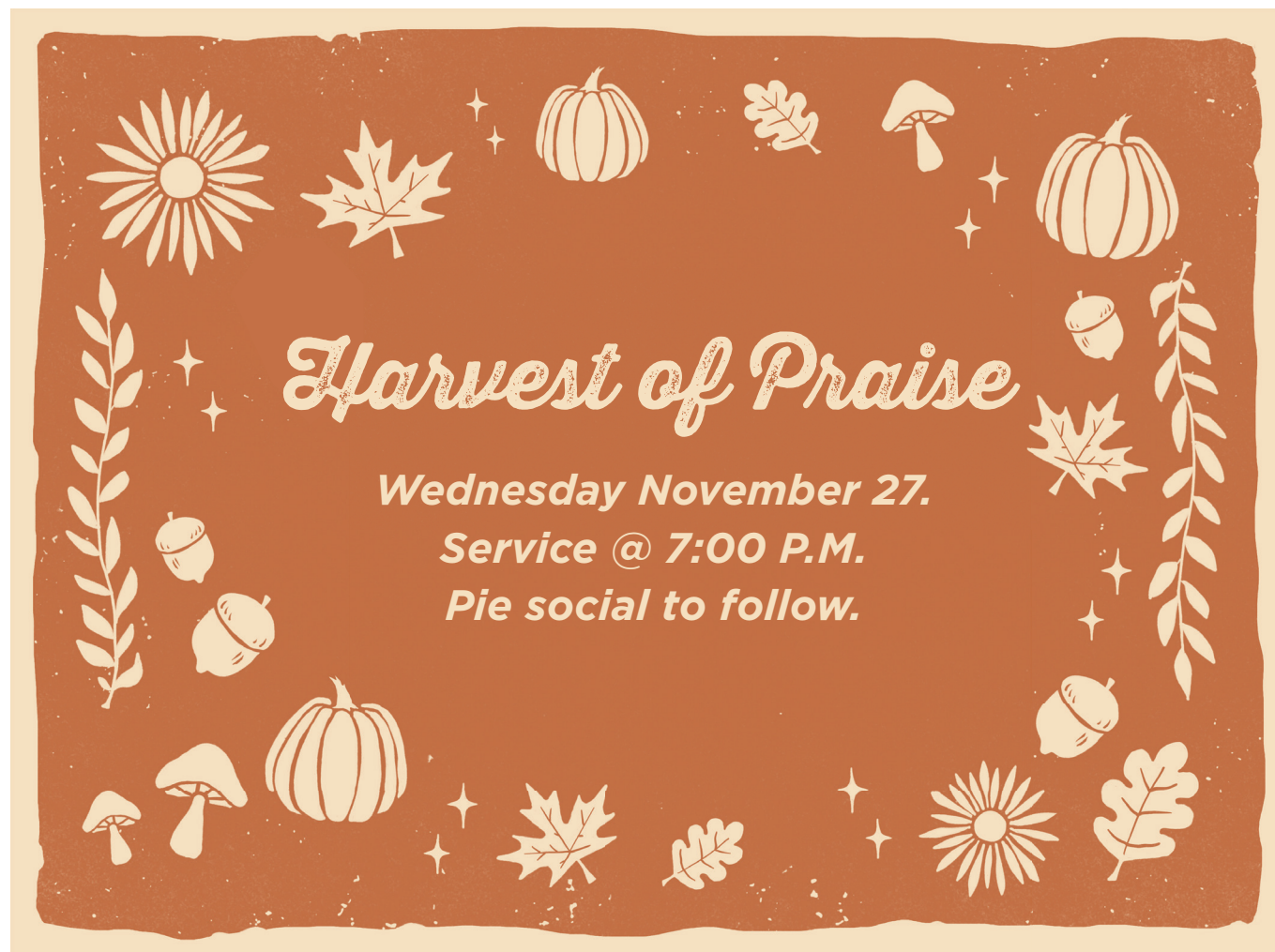
As we enter into this month of November, a month in which we celebrate Thanksgiving, here is my two-part challenge:

First, reflect on what wonderful gifts God has given to you. Your family, your salvation, your friends, your church, your finances, your home, your freedom... Come up with your own list.

And second, give God thanks by paying it forward. Ask in what ways might I give back to others as an appropriate response for the gracious gifts I have been given? How might I expand the circle of reciprocity? How might I pay it forward?

It might be by helping a neighbor rake their leaves, or by assisting an elderly person get to the grocery store, or paying for the coffee of the next person in line.

Through this month, remember Jesus’ words, “Freely you have received. Freely give.”



DID YOU KNOW...

We have an AED in the lobby in case it’s needed.
Ask a Faith Community Nurse to know more.



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

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TWIN CITIES MARATHON

By Jay Pound

Associate Pastor

Thank you to everyone who served with us at the Twin Cities Marathon Fluid Station this year. The Marathon continues to be a great way for us to connect with and serve alongside our community. We want First Free to be a light in our community and a blessing to our neighbors, and this is one of the ways we get to put that into practice every year.

Thanks again to those of you who helped out, I hope we will see you next year!



EXTRAORDINARY NORMS RESULTS

By Joel Sutton

Senior Pastor

Our Extraordinary Norms

By the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, we desire to be church where it is normal to:

1. Be Shaped by God's story and share it with others.
2. Develop relationships that feel like family with other believers.
3. Grow in our ability to reflect the character and priorities of Jesus.
4. Recognize and respond to the needs of others in a tangible way.
5. Live life as residential missionaries.

For the past three years we have invited all those in our church family to fill out our annual Five Extraordinary Norms Survey. This survey lets our leadership know if we are hitting the "mark" as we ask the question, "What does a Christ-Centered, Christ-Sent disciple of Jesus look like?"

This year we had 65 responses.

The survey, once again, indicated some strength areas and some growth areas. For example, we saw movement in people identifying that they have increased in reflecting Christ's character and priorities in their lives. Another strength in our church is that most of our church family feels like they know the overarching story of the Bible and are confident in sharing God's story with others.

One of our growth areas is in the extraordinary norm, "Live Life as a Residential Missionary". Evidently, we have taken a slight step backwards in being convinced of the priority and urgency of sharing the gospel with those who do not profess faith in Jesus.

Over this next year, my invitation is for you to once again reflect on what your next step is in order to further develop these five extraordinary norms in your life. (Extraordinary Norms booklets are available at the Welcome desk.)

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

FALL FLING

CAMP SHAMINEAU | 2024

By Jake Weikel

Student Pastor

This past weekend, 68 students and 15 youth leaders went up to Camp Shamineau for Fall Fling 2024, and it was a blast!

We had a great time, and students were able to do many different activities. Students participated in dodgeball, horseback riding, the new static ropes course, and so much more! Most importantly, we all got to attend the four chapel sessions across the weekend. In these chapel sessions, students got to worship and hear a series of messages from this year's speaker, Daniel Young. In his messages, Daniel talked about how God calls us to not be anxious and to choose good characteristics like honesty. He highlighted the fact that though we fall short, the cross gives us the ultimate reset and allows us to live in an ultimate, everlasting victory.

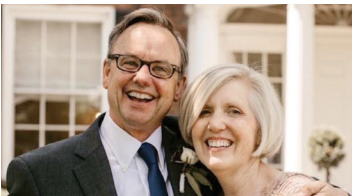
Thank you to all of the great leaders who sacrificed your weekend to spend time with students, and thank you to everybody who supported our trip through giving and prayer. I really enjoyed my first Fall Fling, and I'm even more excited for when we return next year!



PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS...

A party will be held on December 14 at 10:00 a.m. (with a program starting at 10:30 a.m.) to thank Joel and Becky Sutton for 20 years of ministry and service at First Free.

A light brunch will be provided. We hope to see you there!



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Our condolences to the family of Anita Edwards, who passed away in early October. A funeral for Anita will be held at First Free Church on November 15 at 2:00 p.m.
- Congratulations to Asher Koch and Sarah Myers on their marriage! Asher has joined Sarah and Dakota (age 17 months old) in Dayton, Ohio where they are starting their new life together.
- Congratulations to James and Lisa Holliday on the birth of their son, Morgan Gene Holliday, on October 14!