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# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2016

## Thanksgiving Thoughts BY MIKE GRAFF

As Thanksgiving nears once again, you're encouraged to take time and reflect on what we have to be thankful for.

Maybe your list of things to be thankful for is longer than you've ever seen in previous years! Or maybe your list is much smaller than you'd like it to be.

When I think about what I have to be thankful for, I want to tune my heart into the reality that we've been given a gift of unmeasurable value - we've been rescued from our sin through Jesus and have a restored relationship with God in a way we could never earn!

This is likely familiar territory for you, to know that you should be thankful for who you now are in Christ. But I challenge you (and myself) to not think of the gift of God's grace

as something to quickly thank Him for and check off your list of to-dos this season. Take a moment to stop, to sit in silence, and to ask Him to remind you how amazing it is to be loved in a way that surpasses understanding by the Creator of all.

Ask Him to let that gift wow you all over again. And be *thankful*.

There are plenty of things you can thank God for, but may you and I rightly position our hearts to thank Him endlessly for the gift that changed *everything*.

*Join us at our Harvest of Praise service, a chance to come and thank God together for his faithfulness.*

**NOVEMBER 23RD @ 7 P.M.**

## How to Pray for the Elections BY PASTOR JOEL

I have been struggling recently in my prayer life.

Not with praying per se, but with how to pray. Specifically, how to pray for the upcoming elections. So what did I do? I went to Scripture. And I found some answers.

In Paul's great teaching on prayer from 1 Timothy 2:1-3 one of his major points is that we ought to pray for rulers and "all who are in high positions". According to Paul's reasoning, we want a good government that keeps order and peace, so that we might have the freedom to share God's good news with those who are lost.

**Implication #1:** We need to be in prayer for these elections. We should not wait for our leaders to be chosen before we move into prayer. Instead we need to invite the Lord into the process, asking that those who are elected might be leaders who allow us to lead peaceful and quiet lives, godly and dignified in every way.

In Proverbs 14:34, Solomon tells us, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." The selection of leaders who understand and lead according to God's righteousness can bring a great blessing to a nation.

**Implication #2:** We need to pray for leaders (and their advisors) that will understand and lead with God's righteous standards in mind.

In Jeremiah 29:7 God instructs the Israelites who are in exile in Babylon to "seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare". So exiles like Daniel prayed for their rulers even though those rulers were directly opposed to God and to God's people.

**Implication #3:** We must pray to God for our leaders, no matter who is elected. We must pray on their behalf, asking God to work in their lives and through their decisions for our nation's best.

Psalm 20:7 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

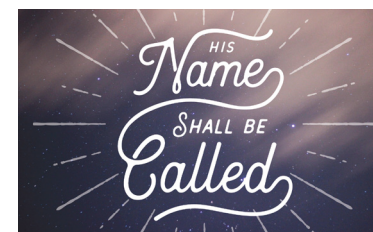
**Implication #4:** Bottom line is that even as we pray for our elections and for our leaders, our undivided heart and trust is in the Lord. Our hope will not be in our new President, or Congressional leaders, or state leaders, but in our God.

Andy Crouch put it this way in Christianity Today:

*"The true Lord of the world reigns even now, far above any earthly ruler. His kingdom is not of this world, but glimpses of its power and grace can be found all over the world. One day his kingdom, and his only, will be the standard by which all earthly kingdoms are judged, and following that judgment day, every knee will bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, as his reign is fully realized in the renewal of all things."*

In these final weeks before the elections, all American Christians should repent and pray - no matter how we might vote. And we should hold on to hope - not in a candidate, but in our Lord Jesus Christ.

May His name be hallowed, may His kingdom come, and may His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.



### OUR UPCOMING SERMON SERIES: HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED

NOVEMBER 27 Immanuel    DECEMBER 18 Lord  
DECEMBER 4 Light        DECEMBER 24 Child  
DECEMBER 11 Jesus

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](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)

# Adult Electives

## NOVEMBER 6, 13, & 20

Each elective will be taught both hours (9:15 and 11:00) on Sundays.

### Managing Everyday Conflict, taught by Pam Hulstrand

Most of us probably receive training in conflict management two times in life: during premarital counseling and when we are already entrenched in a conflict. The flaws in this plan should be self-evident: most of us only find out how to better manage conflict after a significant amount of damage has already been done.

As a pastor, one of my concerns is that we call people to unity, call people to forgive, call people to be reconciled and to seek reconciliation, but then never provide the tools to actually make those things happen in the real world. The reality, highlighted on nearly every page of the Bible, is that conflict is a reality of our fallen world. Peace, unity and reconciliation are neither the default nor the norm - they all require work.

### Stories with Intent: The Parables of Jesus Taught by Pastor Jay

The parables of Jesus are some of the most well-known portions of scripture. Even those who could tell you next to nothing about the person of Jesus will know the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Jesus' parables are vivid, powerful and always challenging. They have shaped our understanding of God and ethics for two thousand years. They are stories with intent, told to arrest, transform, and most of all to call for obedience from all who have an ear to hear. Parables represent the core of all of Jesus' teaching and their importance cannot be overestimated; they are worth all the time we can give them.

I would wager that most of us know we are to seek reconciliation, most of us would like to heed Jesus call to be peacemakers; we know what we should do, and often we even want to do it. The problem, here as elsewhere, is that we don't know how to do it.

If that sounds familiar, I want to invite (and strongly encourage) you to attend our upcoming elective on Conflict Management. The goal of this elective to provide some tangible, practical tools for managing everyday conflict, and training on how to use them. The training will be taught by Pam Hulstrand ([www.onbendedkneeministries.com](http://www.onbendedkneeministries.com)). Pam has over 25 years of experience in premarital counseling, and has trained hundreds of other pastors and ministry (including myself). Take advantage of her experience and expertise, it will benefit you and all of your relationships.

In this three week elective we will first examine parables in general: what they are and how they function. We will then apply what we learn as we look together at several of the parables of Jesus. Our goal is to try and work back to find Jesus' intent, and then adapt it to our own context.

Week 1: An Introduction to Parables

Week 2: Parables Concerning God and Prayer

Week 3: Parables of Future Eschatology

## Church Family News

Congratulations to Brad and Mitzi Tetzloff on the birth of their son, Theodore Robert Tetzloff, who was born on September 26th.

Congratulations to Brian and Laura (Radtko) Johnson, who were married here at First Free on October 8th.

Congratulations to Amanda Kriesel-Koll and Nick Henry on the birth of their daughter, Evelyn Marie Henry, who was born on October 14th.

Meet our new council member:

## LUKE AMSTUTZ



My name is Luke Amstutz. I grew up at First Free and met my wife Ingrid (née Vatsaas) in the church nursery. It wasn't love at first sight, but after years of children's church and youth group, we finally hit it off. We recently celebrated our second wedding anniversary. First Free has always been "home" for Ingrid and me. Growing up in the church, we've been taught, mentored and nurtured by so many people and Ingrid and I are excited to contribute and serve our church family. We currently facilitate the Embark community group for young adults. I'm so excited to serve on council to be able to support the community that has done so much to disciple and raise me to love the Lord.

## Thanks, Ben and David!

A big "thank you" to Ben Byer and David Kriesel-Koll for getting the rock gardens in our parking lot looking great!



## This Month @ FIRST FREE

### CES Food Drive: November 6-13

We will be collecting donations for Community Emergency Services through November 13th. Look for bags and lists of needed items in the foyer.

### Adult Electives: November 6, 13, 20

We are excited to offer you two 3-week electives during both hours (9:15 and 11:00) on Sundays. No need to sign up, just show up!

### Health Care Directives Class: November 6 & 13

Learn about filling out a Health Care Directive, which gives your designated health care agent the ability to carry out your personal care choices in the event of injury or illness that leaves you unable to make your own medical decisions. November 6 or 13 at 11 a.m. in Room 104.

### TOGETHER: A Gathering for Women: Nov. 12

A place to connect, live out and grow in our faith TOGETHER. Please join us for a light fall brunch fellowship Saturday, November 12th at 9:30am. Sign up online at [firstfreechurch.org/comingsoon](http://firstfreechurch.org/comingsoon).

### Baptism: November 13

We will be having a baptism during our first service on Sunday, November 13th. If you are interested in being baptized, contact the church office.

### Flu Clinic: November 13

Flu shots will be given on Sunday, November 13th in the gym following each worship gathering. Anyone age 7 or older can receive a flu shot. Please bring your insurance card with you for billing. If you do not have insurance, a voucher is available so you do not need to pay. The flu clinic is sponsored by Walgreens.

### Quarterly Celebration: November 14

Join us as we celebrate God's faithfulness to us at First Free on Monday, November 14th at 7:00 p.m.

### Student Serve Tour: November 19, 2-8 p.m.

Our students will be serving around the Twin Cities area in a variety of ways and in a variety of locations. This is a great chance for high school and middle school students to get involved in being the hands and feet of Jesus in our own backyard! If you have questions or want more information please e-mail Jason at [jason.pensa@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:jason.pensa@firstfreechurch.org).

### Men's SoulShare: November 19

Men of all ages are welcome to join us for breakfast and fellowship on various Saturday mornings. Contact Ross Olson with any questions at 612-824-7691.

### Visitation Class: November 20

Come and be trained for visitation to the homebound and learn to include spiritual empowerment with your visits. 11:00 a.m. in room 104.

### Harvest of Praise Service and Pie Social: November 23

You are invited to our annual Thanksgiving gathering celebrating God's faithfulness! There will be a pie social following our praise gathering. Households of two or more people, please bring a favorite pie to share. Individuals bring a topping such as whipped cream. Nursery childcare will be provided.

### Expressions: November 13 & 27

Expressions is a support group for those dealing with chronic illness or pain. Join us from 3:30-5:30 p.m. in room 103.

**As we move into winter, remember to check our website for any cancellations and weather-related announcements!**