



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
5150 CHICAGO AVE S.  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55417

Want to receive First Word  
via email? Contact the office  
at [info@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:info@firstfreechurch.org)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TWIN CITIES MN  
PERMIT NO 32622

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Adult Electives: November 12, 19, & 26

Each elective will be offered at both 9:15 and 11:00 a.m. Attend one or both electives. No need to sign up, just show up!

### Elective #1: "Gospel Clarity" with Jay Pound

Many of us find it difficult to talk to others about the gospel - even when we want to. Could it be that we may not understand it as clearly as we assume? Communicating anything effectively begins with understanding it clearly. Join pastor Jay Pound as we look again at the good news of the gospel in order that we might understand and communicate it more clearly. (Runs all 3 weeks).

### Elective #2: Resources for Ministering to the Next Generation

**Week 1:** Hear from Brad Houdashelt, a member of CRU's (formerly Campus Crusade) national staff

as he shares about CRU's efforts to minister in the digital age through social media, technology and the internet.

**Week 2:** Are you the parent or grandparent of a teen? Do you work with students? Have you ever looked for ministry resources, only to feel overwhelmed by the options? Join our student pastor Jason Pensa as he shares some great resources for students.

**Week 3:** We know it can be challenging to sift through all the resources out there for children and families. Join our children's ministry director Beth Brown as she shares some of her favorite choices with you.

# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2017

## Thankful in Every Circumstance BY JOEL SUTTON

Bert and John Jacobs are brothers who cofounded the \$100 million "Life Is Good" T-shirt company. They grew up the youngest of six children in a lower middle-class family in Boston. When the brothers were in elementary school, their parents were in a near-death car accident from which their mother managed to escape with just a few broken bones, but their father lost the use of his right hand.

The stress and frustration from his physical therapy caused him to develop a harsh temper, they explain in their new book *Life Is Good*. "He did a lot of yelling when we were in grade school," John told Business Insider. "And life certainly wasn't perfect."

But their mom, Joan, still believed life was good. So, every night as the family sat around the dinner table, she would ask her six kids to tell her something good that happened that day. "As simple as mom's words were, they changed the energy in the room," the brothers write. "Before we knew it, we were all riffing on the best, funniest, or most bizarre part of our day."

Growing up with a mother like theirs—one who sang in the kitchen, told animated stories, and acted out children's books for them, no matter what bad situation they were going through—taught them an important lesson: being happy isn't dependent on your circumstances. "She showed us that optimism is a courageous choice you can make every day, especially in the face of adversity."

Some of you have had a tough year. You've lost your job. Maybe you have gone through a difficult time in your marriage. Now we come to Thanksgiving and you wonder, "How can I give thanks to God when times are tough?"

I Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us to "give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (NIV).

Paul is not saying in this verse to give thanks for everything. For example, you don't have to give thanks for evil in the world. If my wife was sick, I would not be thankful for her sickness. But what he is saying is that in every circumstance, no matter how bad it is, we can give thanks to God because . . .

. . . His purpose is bigger than my problem.

. . . He will give me the power to overcome.

. . . I know that I will grow through the experience if I allow God to use it in my life.

I don't have to be thankful for evil, but I can be thankful despite evil. I don't have to be thankful for a bad situation, but I can be thankful in the midst of a bad situation.

How can you be grateful when you have lost your job or your health or your spouse? By looking not at what you've lost - but what you have. That was what caught my eye about the Jacobs brothers' story. Their mother taught them to find the best in each day.

So here is the question for this Thanksgiving: What are you taking for granted? Your health? Your freedom? Your relationships? This Thanksgiving sing that old, familiar hymn, "Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done."



### CURRENT SERIES:

#### FROM HERE TO THERE

- NOV. 5 And You Thought Your Day Was Long
- NOV. 12 A Promise Kept; Joshua 14
- NOV. 19 As for Me; Joshua 24

### ADVENT SERIES: I WAS THERE

What would it have looked like if you had been there when Jesus was born? What would it have felt like to experience first-hand the birth of the radiance of God's glory? Join us this Christmas season starting November 26th as we explore the miracle of miracles from the vantage point of four who were there.

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

## WANT MORE INFO?

Visit [www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)  
Visit our Facebook page  
Find us on Twitter  
@ FEFCMpls

## FIRST FREE STAFF

**JOEL SUTTON**  
SENIOR PASTOR  
[joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org)

**JAY POUND**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
[jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org)

**JASON PENZA**  
STUDENT PASTOR  
[jason.pensa@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:jason.pensa@firstfreechurch.org)

**BETH BROWN**  
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR  
[beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org)

**MIKE GRAFF**  
WORSHIP PASTOR  
[mike.graff@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:mike.graff@firstfreechurch.org)

**MAUREEN JUAREZ & JEANINE BRUEN**  
FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES  
[nurses@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:nurses@firstfreechurch.org)

**ANNE PETERSON**  
OFFICE MANAGER  
[anne.peterson@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:anne.peterson@firstfreechurch.org)

**MARY QUINT**  
DESIGN/OFFICE ASSISTANT  
[mary.quint@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:mary.quint@firstfreechurch.org)

**SCOTT BECKETT**  
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN  
[scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org)

**DAVID KRIESEL-KOLL**  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR  
[david.kriesel-koll@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:david.kriesel-koll@firstfreechurch.org)



SEE MORE INFO AT:  
[www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)



## Serving our Community

If First Free went away, would people notice? Would they miss us? This summer and fall, we have stepped out and taken a risk to build positive relationships with our neighbors. Coming to church on Sunday mornings can be an intimidating step for some people, so we go to them where they're at. As Christ-centered and Christ-sent people, every interaction is an opportunity to show love.

On October 1st, **over 50 First Free volunteers served at the Twin Cities Marathon.** Our group worked the mile 9 fluid station handing out water to runners. We also had free coffee and donuts for our neighbors at our cheering section.

Throughout the summer **we hosted the Nokomis Farmers Market** in our parking lot. Representatives from our church body were present to promote some of our events during the Farmers Market season. We also had volunteers at our doors to greet and monitor the building, which allowed us to open our bathrooms for our neighbors to use.

Dee Huanca said, "I had the opportunity to have a place at a table each Wednesday to let those attending know about some of the activities at First Free. As a result, a couple of people from the community came to the Alzheimer's classes and a couple of people asked to attend our spring Stepping On program. It was encouraging to hear comments like, "There are churches that sort of keep to themselves but we appreciate your reaching out to the community." Many thanked us for hosting the Farmers Market. It was so enjoyable getting to know the vendors, hearing fun music, greeting church friends and meeting more of our neighbors."

During the recent **art fair** put on by the The Hale-Page Diamond Lake Neighborhood Association, thousands of people visited our stretch of Chicago Avenue. The street was packed with families and kids enjoying the art and entertainment. We provided our parking lot space for music and a bike corral and ordered an inflatable slide and bounce house for the kids.

Thank you to all who volunteer at events like these throughout the year! You allow us to serve our community and bless our neighbors. As we do good deeds, we build a foundation of goodwill and a platform for conversations about the Good News.

*"Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7*

Check out the new church van! The old van showed the wear and tear of its years of use and it was time for an upgrade. This new vehicle, a 2016 Ford 15-passenger van, will be much more comfortable and reliable for groups to take on trips. Thanks to Steve Mondy for flying to Chicago to pick it up!



## A Long Life of Faith

*"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life."  
Proverbs 16:31*

Walter Ortman will be celebrating his 106th birthday on December 3rd, so we wanted to celebrate with him by sharing a brief part of his story.

Walter was born in North Dakota and grew up on a farm. Walt says, "I have fond childhood memories of special family breakfasts, with the entire family seated around the living room table. Father would open the Bible and briefly read a portion and make some brief comments. Our home was noted as an open place for traveling evangelists to spend a night or two on their trips to various places in the country. I was always very thrilled as I listened to the stories they told my dad (of their experiences) as they preached various places. Sometimes they had to flee for their lives so as to not be physically harmed by protesters, due to their preaching. Dad used to go and get them if they were available to spend nights at our house (on their way to North Dakota, Michigan and Canada)."

After graduating as valedictorian of his high school class in 1928, he worked on his family's farm for a few years before enrolling at Anderson University. Towards the end of his first year there, his father died unexpectedly and Walter had to return home to run the farm. In the 1940's he returned to college to study social work but his education was again interrupted by World War II. He spent over 3 years in the Air Force with the air rescue squadron in the Philippines, rescuing more than 700 people.

After his discharge, Walter returned to college to finish his degree and eventually went on to receive a master's degree in social work. He and his wife Lois were married for 63 years and had two children. During his 20 year career as a psychiatric social worker, he shared kindness and care to many, but the work was not always easy or comfortable.

"Memories of my counseling include sitting in a dining room in a home with a husband and wife, when the husband pointed at a deep hole in the wall. He mentioned that the hole was the result of him missing his wife's head. I realized he was telling me: be careful what you say, as I might throw something at you!

There are also memories when I entered a prison to counsel inmates. I shuttered a bit as I heard the click of the prison gate close behind me. Then again as the door shut (with me inside) the prisoner's 6 x 6 foot cell. Yes, there are serious consequences to bad behavior."

He continued counseling those who could not afford it after he retired. Hanging in his home is a plaque from The Wilder Foundation, where he worked for 20 years, recognizing his work with children who went through the center.

Walter found First Free when he attended a friend's funeral here. As a result he has been attending with his son-in-law, Doug Erickson, for the past 9 months. Happy 106th birthday, Walter!



## This Month @ FIRST FREE

### Day Light Saving Time Ends: November 5

Don't forget to set your clocks back on Saturday night!

### Food/Personal Hygiene Drive for Community Emergency Services

Pick up bags from the church foyer on Sundays Nov. 5 & 12. Return bags to the church foyer on Nov. 12 & 19. CES especially needs: dry potatoes, stuffing, pasta & rice sides, canned pasta with meat, stew, chili, canned vegetables, jelly or jam, fruit juice, toothpaste, deodorant, feminine products, shampoo, soap, conditioner, toilet paper, and razors.

### Child Dedication: Nov. 12

We will have a child dedication on Sunday, November 12th. If interested in having your child dedicated, contact the church office or talk to a pastor.

### Adult Electives: November 12, 19, & 26

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! See the back of this newsletter or visit our website for more info.

### Quarterly Celebration (Business Meeting): Nov. 13

Join us as we celebrate God's faithfulness to us on Monday, November 13th at 7:00 p.m.

### Women's Together Brunch: November 18

A place to connect, live out and grow in our faith together. Join us for a light brunch on Saturday, November 18th, 9:30-11:00 a.m. All First Free ladies age high school and above are welcome. RSVP at [firstfreechurch.org/comingsoon](http://firstfreechurch.org/comingsoon).

### Harvest of Praise Service: November 22

You are invited to our annual Thanksgiving worship gathering celebrating God's faithfulness! There will be a pie social following our praise gathering. Nursery childcare provided.