



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
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## *Better Together* BY PAUL ANLEITNER

Beginning in the late 1960's and early 70's, a Dutch social psychologist working with IBM attempted to identify and compare the core values held by various national cultures throughout the world. How did the values of Americans differ from, say, the values of Japanese culture? This was an important practical question as businesses and corporations became increasingly globalized and divergent peoples needed to communicate across not only language differences but cultural differences in values. The researcher's name was Geert Hofstede, and his work in trying to compare and assign a numerical scoring system to rank and compare national-cultural values continued on for decades.

One of the values that Hofstede and his team compared among different national cultures was individualism. Nations that tended to highly value individualism tended to believe that things like privacy, individual freedom, and individual accomplishment were of utmost importance. In highly individualistic cultures, people see themselves as primarily a singular individual not a member of a particular group as those in other cultures do that more highly value collectivism. Among the 140 national cultures currently evaluated in the Hofstede Index, guess what country has the highest ranking for valuing individualism?

That's right. Our own culture right here in the good ol' U.S.A.

Now we can certainly see biblical precedent for the value of the individual.

The Bible affirms how each person is made in the image of God, endowing each individual person with inherent value and worth. The New Testament Church certainly believed there were radical implications to Christ's death for all people that conferred counter-cultural dignity to people regardless of the collective group they were born into. In Christ, whether you were rich or poor, male or female, Jew or Gentile, you had value and an equal place at the Lord's Table (see Galatians 3:28).

And yet, the Gospel also presents some challenges to our hyper-individualistic American culture. Yes each individual has inherent dignity and worth, but that worth does not untether us from our responsibility to others, nor does it mean that we can find joy or fulfillment in a life lived as isolated individuals detached from community. No, God designed us to go through a shared journey of life and faith with others.

We are better together.

After the birth of the Church, when the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost in Acts 2, we see Luke (the author of Acts) summarize the results of this outpouring of the Spirit on these new Christians in verse 42-46,

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They*

*sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Check out the words I've intentionally bolded in that passage and notice how they confront some of the unhealthy aspects of a hyper-individualistic culture. Following Jesus wasn't a nice private spiritual practice, part of a regiment of individualistic "self-care." Following Jesus was community-centered. They gathered together in worship for preaching, Communion, and prayer, but it wasn't just a Sunday morning thing. They met regularly in their homes, shared their possessions with others, and probably had some pretty awesome potluck dinners. And this wasn't some "insiders only" club either. The community continually expanded as "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

The reality of the pandemic that we've all lived through these past 18 months is that most of us have experienced isolation in unprecedented ways. Maybe some of you who really prided yourself on being a rugged individualist even started to feel a sense of something missing with the increased isolation.

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I'm so thankful for technology that allowed us any sense of connection together at all during this difficult season—livestreamed worship, Zoom small groups and Bible studies; but as the pandemic eventually wanes (and though recent surge in COVID numbers has called into question whether this will ever wane, it will not last forever) and we can safely and responsibly start embracing life together with others in-person again, we want to invite you into deeper connection with Christian community.

That is why our theme as we head into the fall season will be Better Together. Pastor Joel will be returning from sabbatical and calling us to participate in the great joys of Christian community. All of our ministry staff and leaders will be helping you see what the next steps are for finding deeper connection with others in our church through worship, connecting with a small group, finding a place to serve in the community, and empowering you to be on mission together in the mission fields God has called you to bless.

***This journey of life is better together.***



**HAS YOUR INFORMATION CHANGED?**

Please update the church office if your phone number,  
email or home address has changed recently

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

**WANT MORE INFO?**

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



MOPS & MOMS NEXT

**MOPS/MOMS next is excited to be back this fall!**

We will return to our traditional Friday morning, twice monthly, in-person gathering. Meetings will be held at First Free from 9:30-11:30 am. We would love to have you join us!

**What is MOPS & MOMs next?**

We are a gathering of moms, coming together for community, conversation and friendship. No matter the age of the mother, the age of her children or where she mothers, MOPS offers moms a community of women who will help each other break down the myth that we have to be perfect to raise great children. We offer childcare for preschool age children, as well as a classroom for older, school-age children. Come for hot coffee, friendship, and spiritual growth as we journey through motherhood together.

We will host a MOPS Registration Get Together on August 31, 2021 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm, outside the church. Come to chat, ask questions, and register! Our first Friday morning gathering will be September 17th. More info and early registration can be found at <https://www.firstfreechurch.org/mops> or email at: [mops@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:mops@firstfreechurch.org)



**CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

- Congratulations to Brad & Mitzi Tetzloff who dedicated their daughter, Rosemary, in a private service this August.

**FALL 2021 @ FIRST FREE**

**CREEKSIDE BIBLE TIME AND CHILDREN'S CHURCH**  
Starting Sunday, September 12, 2021



On Sunday mornings, all kids are learning about Creation to Chaos from The Gospel Project, beginning in the book of Genesis. Every age group learns the same Bible truths each week, which should encourage good family discussions. Nursery and Preschool are available for the entirety of both services each Sunday morning. Sunday morning Bible Time is during our 9:00 a.m. service. Kids kindergarten-fifth grade meet in classes by age and grade. Kids are with their leaders for the whole hour. Children's Church is during the 10:30 a.m. service. Elementary kids begin their time in the worship service with family or guardians and are dismissed from the sanctuary before the sermon begins. Kids will be divided into appropriate age groups where they learn from the Bible.

**CREEKSIDE CLUBS**  
Starting Wednesday, September 22, 2021  
6:30-8:00 p.m.

Wednesday night Creekside Clubs are for kids in first-fifth grades. Kids are divided into groups based on gender and grade. Boys and Girls have an opportunity to spend time with leaders who care about them and want to invest in their lives—while pointing them to Jesus Christ. We do activities, games, hands-on projects, and learn from the Bible together.



**REGISTER HERE**



SCAN ME

**VELOCITY SUNDAYS**  
Starting Sunday, September 12, 2021  
9:00-10:00 a.m.  
In the Youth Room 107/108



On Sunday mornings, all students will be learning about an overview of the Bible, using the The Gospel Foundations, beginning in the book of Genesis we will begin our high-level overview of the Bible. We will have time for reading from the passages in the Bible as well as discussion questions to see what we are learning.

**VELOCITY YOUTH GROUP**  
Starting Wednesday, September 15, 2021  
6:30-8:30 p.m.

On Wednesday nights our Middle School students will be meeting in the gym for some game time before heading to Room 105/106 for a lesson and then breaking up for Small Groups. For our High School students we will be meeting in the Youth Room (Room 107/108) for IceBreakers and teaching before heading into their small groups. All students will get some gym time from 8:00-8:30 p.m.



- It is an ongoing priority to be small group centered. We believe that students need to be in a group of their peers where they can share openly and honestly in a safe environment.
- We will continue to point students to Jesus as He is revealed in God's Word as not only the answer but the one with whom they ultimately need to have a trusting relationship.
- We hope that Velocity Student Ministries will be a safe place for students to bring their friends who may or may not be interested in Church or have a relationship with Jesus.