

# Candidate Profiles

## *2019 Elected Officers*

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### ELDER CANDIDATES



**Keith Adams**

**Spouse:** Kim  
**Children:** Cole, Ethan,  
Jack, Nicolas

**Employment:** Bay State Milling Co.

**Member for:** 22 years

**How do you desire God to use you as an elder?**

I believe we have a church that does a great job of presenting Christ-centered biblical teaching and preaching, with a strong focus on making disciples and growing strong believers. As the community around us continues to change and our church continues to grow, we are facing new challenges on how to successfully continue our charge to expand the kingdom. Remaining committed to biblical principles in the face of growing pressure from the world, while carefully adapting and changing to meet the needs of a more diverse community, will pose many challenges for us. Change is a hard thing for many people to accept, however it comes to us regardless. I believe God has provided me with skills and knowledge that can be

supportive to both the Elder Board and the church in identifying, developing, communicating, and implementing the things that will be glorifying to God and help further the work of the church in his will.



**Ken Bengtson**

**Spouse:** Connie  
**Children:** Rebecca,  
Matthew, Jonathan,

Michael, Jessica, Daniel, Sarah

**Members for:** 47 years

**How do you desire God to use you as an elder?**

I have served several times on the Elder Board in the past. I have been Church Chairman and Elder Chair at times while serving. This experience gives me an understanding of the requirements and responsibilities in serving the church body as an elder

The joy of serving on the board is working with staff and other elders to serve our members and strengthen our mission. It's a great group of mature believers who love our church. I believe I contribute to focusing on issues that encourage the body to move forward

boldly and to minister to the community.

As elders we are called to be shepherds. Because of my long tenure at the church, I know a lot of our regular attenders. I'm a people person. I also have experienced joy and hardships in life which helps me empathize and minister to others. It's an awesome responsibility to serve which I humbly accept.



### **Cary Lavender**

**Spouse:** Susan  
**Member for:** 27 years  
**Employment:** WSU,

Information Technology Services

#### **How do you desire God to use you as an elder?**

I have attended First Free for almost forty years. Over the course of time I have been blessed to serve in numerous ways. God has, I believe, given me ability and joy in the area of teaching and a love for theology and sound doctrine, along with a desire to see the church function not as an organization, but as a family—the body of Christ.

Service on the Midwest District's Board of Ministerial Standing has give me an even greater respect for the EFCA and its desire to see the church protected and well-fed, and its members growing in discipleship and disciple-making. I see the Elder Board as serving in much the same role at the level of the local church, providing oversight and seeking to protect the members and ensure that they are

being built up, and to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

## **TRUSTEE CANDIDATES**



### **Derek Claassen**

**Spouse:** Lindsey  
**Children:** Taryn,  
Brecken, Aven, Deacon,  
Madden, Blessin Morris

**Member for:** 6 years

**Employment:** Prairie Construction, LLC

#### **How do you desire God to use you as a trustee?**

In serving on the Trustee Board for the past three years I have gained insight and wisdom from the other trustees and would like to use that insight to continue to serve as a trustee. I believe that we have a great responsibility to steward the resources that God entrusts us with to have an impact on our community as we encourage ministries within our church that focus on reaching those around us.



### **David Duncan**

**Spouse:** Erika  
**Children:** Kayli, Anna,  
Isaac

**Member for:** 7 years

**Employment:** Sasnak Management

#### **How do you desire God to use you as a trustee?**

I simply hope that, in some small way, God will use me to help further the

mission of our church by serving on the Trustee Board. I do believe he has gifted me in the areas of business, accounting, numbers, etc., and I think those gifts can be put to good use in the decision-making processes that we go through as trustees. I am certainly honored to be able to serve another term and look forward to God working in our body.



### **John Hendley**

**Spouse:** Erika

**Children:** Simon, Anna

**Member for:** 3 years

**Employment:** High School Math Teacher at Trinity Academy

#### **How do you desire God to use you as a trustee?**

I see myself as a listener and learner of the workings of the Trustee Board. I care about the integrity of the church management and operations and am excited about the opportunity to serve in this role. I feel that God has gifted me with the ability to steward resources and to see the big picture when making decisions.

## **DEACON CANDIDATES**



### **Connie Bengtson**

**Spouse:** Ken

**Children:** Rebecca, Matthew, Jonathan,

Michael, Jessica, Daniel, Sarah

**Member for:** 12 years

#### **How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I would love to be faithful to the body, representing the church as I compassionately send sympathy cards to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one in their family. I know how much it meant to me when my father passed away several years ago. I still have those cards and remember how loved and cared for I felt as I received each one. We are called to love one another and how much more in a time of loss and sorrow.

God has certainly given me a tender heart and the desire to encourage others. These gifts serve me well as I reach out to those suffering a great loss, in the name of First Free. I'm so happy to serve in this way.



### **Colleen Cox**

**Spouse:** David

**Children:** Alaina, Rachel

**Member for:** 27 years

#### **How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I am so grateful to God for First Free. It is an honor and joy to be used by the Lord to minister to the various needs of this church body, specifically now as deacon. I've seen from past experience that whenever I'm willing to say yes to him, he'll equip and enable me to do the task before me. I look forward to helping with the administration of communion and baptism, where I can use the organizational, detail-oriented skills with which God's gifted me.



## David Cox

**Spouse:** Colleen  
**Children:** Alaina, Rachel  
**Member for:** 23 years

**Employment:** Textron Aviation  
**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I see myself as a humble servant of God and am willing to use my God-given talents and abilities to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of this church body. For the past twenty three years I have served in various capacities in Children's Ministries. As a deacon, I will strive to show others God's love through compassion, patience, attention to detail, and organizational skills as I serve in oversight of baptism and communion, or other areas as requested.



## Kacie Edleston

**Spouse:** Dave  
**Children:** Henry, Nora, Will

**Member for:** 3 years  
**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

As Welcome Center Deacon, I hope to create an atmosphere of hospitality where members of our church go out of their way to welcome all who come through our doors, to help them connect, fostering unity as we show the love of Jesus.

I feel like God has given me the ability to be welcoming, outgoing, and encouraging.

I enjoy helping others connect and get involved in the same way that I have been helped in the past. I'm excited to continue working to advance the mission of our church alongside others.



## Sandy Friesen

**Spouse:** Donald  
**Member for:** 34 years

**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

My role is coordinating the Greeter Ministry. I recruit, train, and maintain staffing of greeters at the three main doors into our church building. This ministry desires to make our church a welcoming and friendly place for regular attendees and visitors.

Our greeters are the first face people see when entering our building and are a key source of encouragement and warmth as they welcome everyone and guide visitors to the Welcome Center or our services.

God has blessed me with a friendly smile and a willing heart to serve in this practical way. I firmly believe the greeters are a vital part of our church and desire to make it effective. I have enjoyed serving in this role for three years and look forward to serving another three. We are always looking for more volunteers!



## Linda Baker

**Spouse:** Roy  
**Children:** Tamara, Jon, Matt

**Member for:** 12 years

**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

Serving funeral dinners allow families to relax and spend time sharing memories with family and friends without worrying about a meal on the day of their loved one's service. I have been the recipient of such dinners giving me understanding of how helpful this is. God has given me compassion for others.



**Linda Brunson**

**Spouse:** Paul

**Children:** Christopher, Mark, Timothy, Jonathan, Stephen

**Member for:** 27 years

**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I'm praying that God will help me minister to families when they desire to have a meal served to them after the loss of a loved one. I believe God has given me compassion and the heart to serve others.



**Susie Lavender**

**Spouse:** Cary

**Children:** Brock, Nathan, Kelly

**Member for:** 18 years

**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

The three deacons that plan, prepare, and serve funeral meals provide physical comfort, support, and encouragement to

families and friends who are in the midst of being stunned and overwhelmed by the death of a loved one. The church body meets spiritual needs by praying and responding in love to each other.

One of my strengths is to organize and work events/projects. Having been the recipient of two funeral meals at church, I appreciated receiving this gift. In fact, the church funeral meal was the only time I had to visit with some of my relatives from out of state. It will be a joy to serve on the committee that prepares and serves funeral meals to others. The church family can minister to the family and friends, who have traveled on short notice. This meets physical and emotional needs. God uses our experiences to help us empathize with and support others, especially in times of great need. God uses his people to help each other and to accomplish his will. We are his hands and feet.



**Merav Maxwell**

**Spouse:** Dean

**Children:** Grace, Leo

**Member for?** 7 years

**How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I am gifted in the area of administration and organization and my desire is that I would use these skills to enhance the ministry at First Free particularly in the area of hospitality and fellowship.

I look to use the abilities and gifts that God has given me to help build up and strengthen the church body.



## Steve Pryor

**Spouse:** Kathy

**Children:** Christina

**Member for:** 6 years

### **How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

In my case, managing the ushers. I feel this is as much a physical need as it is spiritual. The ushers should warmly welcome people as they enter the worship center, help them in getting situated and meeting other needs, and be as invisible and efficient as possible in the important task of collecting the offering; all relatively simple tasks, but critically important in service to the body. I believe God has gifted me with the ability to organize and execute such tasks. Through life experiences, he has taught me how to serve humbly, effectively, and efficiently, and be committed to the task at hand. I have greatly benefited from the experience of my first term as the Usher Deacon and am prepared to serve faithfully for another term. I humbly submit myself for your consideration.



## Bob Taylor

**Spouse:** Jan

**Children:** Three adult children

**Member for:** 44 years

### **How do you desire God to use you as a deacon?**

I can see the need to spend time with and encourage those who are “out of

circulation” primarily due to health issues. Such visits can be done in hospital settings or in homes. I fully recognize Christ’s help in allowing me to extend interest and compassion but very often I am the one who is blessed.

## MISSIONS COMMITTEE CANDIDATES



## Lori Day

**Member for:** 11 years

**Employment:** Caregiver/  
Writer

### **How do you desire God to use you as a member of the Missions Committee?**

First Free was my sending church for five years (2008-2013) and enabled me to answer God’s call on my life for that time to serve his kingdom in Kazakhstan. I learned language and culture, I made local and ex-pat friends, I worked as a teacher, I figured out how to shop for groceries, do laundry and life in general without reliable utilities, I wrestled with visa laws, and I eventually got kicked out. I have lived through the hard process of reverse culture shock. I have felt very strongly that the experiences I had—in Central Asia, and returning to the States—were not meant for me alone, but they were given to me to share deeply with others. I believe that serving on the Missions Committee is a very tangible way to share the lessons I’ve lived and learned through working overseas to build up others.



**Jordan Lukert**

**Spouse:** Kelcee

**Children:** Cullen

**Member for:** 5 years

**Employment:** Graybar Electric Supply

**How do you desire God to use you as a member of the Missions Committee?**

As a believer, I have grown to understand through Scripture and discipleship the importance of serving in the body of Christ. Through the years I have served in multiple capacities and learned about some of my spiritual gifting while serving. As a Member of the Missions Committee I desire to assist in choosing, planning, partnering, and performing with mission organizations through prayer, discernment, and utilizing my administration skills on furthering the kingdom. As situations/ideas are presented throughout the term to the committee, I'll be able to use prayer, God's Word, and discernment to decide on important matters regarding our resources, gifts, and time.



**Kevin Miller**

**Spouse:** Rebecca

**Children:** Cameron, Nick,  
Ryan

**Member for:** 3 years

**Employment:** Surgeon for Associates in Women's Health

**How do you desire God to use you as a member of the Missions Committee?**

The responsibility of the Missions Committee is to serve the Lord and First Free in oversight of our missions work. My desire as part of this committee is to be used as God and our elders direct so that we can faithfully accomplish that oversight so that the grace of the gospel would go wide to all peoples.

**Mark your calendar!**

*Sunday, November 18*

*Snacks at 5:00 pm*

*Members Meeting at 6:00 pm*