



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

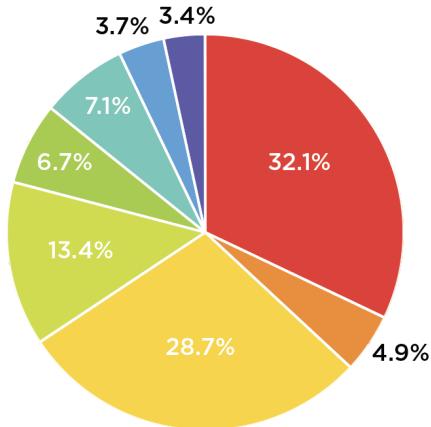
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## CHURCHNEXT SURVEY

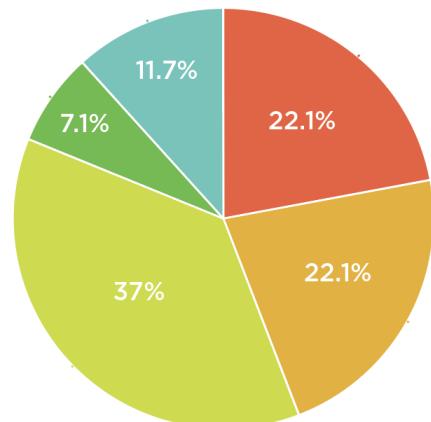
The last 12 months have helped me realize the personal importance of these aspects of church life:



- Worshipping In-Person
- Seeing Church Friends
- Participating in a Class or Small Group
- Participating in Church Activities and Events
- Serving Within the Church
- Worshipping Online
- Reaching Out to People Disconnected From God
- Serving to Meet the Needs of Our Community

**Here are a couple of results from the survey we asked our congregation to fill out to help us plan for the next season.**

In terms of your spiritual growth, which aspect of church life do you anticipate will be most helpful going forward?



- Preaching in Worship Services
- Bible Study or Class
- Small Group
- My Close Church Friendships
- Serving

# First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

MAY 2021

## Creation Set Free BY JAY POUND

Over the past many years, God has been at work in my life and heart to root out jealousy. I have struggled with jealousy, and I suspect that I am not alone. Somewhere along the way, I read an observation that first convicted me, and has since worked steadily to change me. Here was the observation: Given that we all are constantly tempted to compare "up," why is it that it seldom occurs to any of us to compare "down?" We casually wonder why our neighbor has a nicer car, or our coworker makes more money, but we seldom consider the reverse. Why do we have a nicer car than so many others? Why did we get this job, when so many others struggle to find gainful employment?

We are also prone to this kind of one-directional comparison on a larger scale too. Our predilection as we look around at our world is often to ask why things are so bad. If there is a good God, and if that good God is in control, why is there so much evil, so much suffering, so much grief and poverty? But we seldom ask - or at least we ask less than we should - the opposite questions: Why is there so much beauty, so much goodness, so much to enjoy and celebrate? If there is no God, or if he is not good, what explains things like sunsets, kindness and everyday acts of grace? Why don't we ask those kinds of questions more often?

One answer to that, as this past year has illustrated, is that every so often terrible things happen that demand answers. There are tragedies and catastrophes that simply cannot and should not be ignored. When there is flagrant injustice,

widespread suffering, or when you lose a loved one too soon, it simply is not good enough to shrug and say, "Well, it could have been worse."

So where exactly does that leave us? What are we to make of a world that is one minute full of beauty and goodness, but the next marred by evil and suffering? What do we make of a world where the same event can elicit petty cruelty and extravagant kindness?

I would humbly suggest that what we see is exactly what the Biblical Narrative should lead us to expect: A good world, created by a good God, corrupted and marred by sin and evil. In other words, there are two deep truths here, right alongside each other, and neither one can be allowed to overshadow the other.

First, our world bears deep and painful wounds as a result of sin and evil; to dismiss them is to deny the reality of sin and to marginalize the suffering of all people. But second, these wounds scar a world, a creation, whose beauty is nevertheless obvious, despite the damage.

Think of the Notre Dame Cathedral, badly and tragically damaged by a fire. Denying the damage, pretending that nothing is wrong is impossible - just look at the pictures. No one, even those who had never seen it before the fire, could look at it now and think that this was how it was meant to be. The damage is obvious and substantial. But it is still beautiful. It is equally impossible to look now at that building, damaged as it is, and deny that it is still a wonder, let alone to believe that it never was. Even now,

those with eyes to see will recognize the beauty that once was and will be again.

The apostle Paul, writing in Romans 8:21, makes the same point - the same claim - about all of creation: "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God." The beauty is still there to see, damaged as it is, and one day God will restore it to its full glory and goodness." One day creation itself will be set free from the sin and evil that has so deeply scarred it.

But for Paul, and for all of the authors of scripture, this is neither blind hope nor optimism, it is faith that what God has already done for Jesus, he will one day do for us and for all creation. At the end of Luke's gospel, part of the point of emphasizing Jesus' physical body - his eating, drinking and corporeal presence - is to demonstrate that new creation has already started. Jesus' resurrected body is God's down-payment, his proof that sin really has been dealt with, and promise that one day the beauty of creation will be fully restored. One day, there will be no more injustice, no more suffering and no more death and the glory of God will cover the earth as water covers the ocean floors. And for those with eyes to see, that glorious future is already visible, in the enduring beauty of creation and in the resurrection of our Lord.

**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)

## ANNUAL CELEBRATION

MAY 16TH

Celebration at both Worship Services, 9:00 am & 10:30 am. Join us as we worship together, hear stories and celebrate how God has been working this past year in our church family.

Business meeting at 5:00 pm via Zoom. Join us later in the day of our Celebration as we present our 2021-2022 budget, the nominations for Commissions and Finance and Property Board and vote in new members. (The Zoom invite for this meeting will be sent out in the All-Church email the Friday before the meeting). There will be question and answer time starting at 4:30 via Zoom and the actual meeting will start at 5:00 pm.

Annual reports are available on our website at  
[www.firstfreechurch.org/annual-reports](http://www.firstfreechurch.org/annual-reports).

**MARCH 22ND**  
FIRST PRE-RECORDED  
 **SERMON**

**1.7 TONS**  
OF SUPPLIES COLLECTED  
IN OUR PERSONAL  
HYGIENE DRIVE

**244**  
AVERAGE  
LIVESTREAM  
VIEWERS

**52**  
PRAYER  
MEETINGS

**76** BAGS  
DONATED  
TO CES

**38** LIVESTREAMED  
SERVICES

**\$16,136**  
DONATED TO  
THE ONEFUND



**68**  
STUDENTS  
WENT TO  
FALL FLING

**74** CREEKSIDE  
& VELOCITY  
VOLUNTEERS

**2020 @**  
**FIRST FREE**  
**CHURCH**

LIVING CHRIST-CENTERED & CHRIST-SENT

**235 KIDS**  
PARTICIPATED IN  
STAYCATION  
BIBLE CAMP

**SUPPORTED 24**  
MISSIONARIES

## VACATION BIBLE CAMP

JUNE 21-25TH, 2021

Registration opens on Monday May 3rd!

- VBC AT CHURCH will have a registration cap of **100 participants** and is for kids entering kindergarten through completing fifth grade. We will follow Covid-19 protocols of having a reduced number of kids in the rooms and kids will be seated at tables in order to stay the appropriate distance from each other. All kids and leaders will have their temperatures taken daily and will be required to wear face coverings at all times while in the building.
- VBC AT HOME will be a packet-style VBC, similar to STAYcation Bible Camp from last year. Families will pick up packets and take them home to create fun crafts, learn Bible stories, and watch VBC videos. VBC AT HOME is for kids preschool through completing fifth grade
- Register online at [firstfreechurch.org/vbc2021](http://firstfreechurch.org/vbc2021)

If you have any questions, please contact Becki Kobielski  
[vbc@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:vbc@firstfreechurch.org)



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SENIORS!

- Johnny Audette
- Ohka Conrad
- Lily Eggen Lim
- Ethan Gilman
- Allianna Gionfriddo
- Lauren Holliday
- Anthony Longfield
- Laura Olson
- Jonah Peters
- Sarah Read
- Jamison Taylor



## CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

- Our condolences to the family of Doug Beckett, who passed away at the age of 73.
- Congratulations to Gretchen and Sam Ekstrom on the birth of their son Remy Reed Ekstrom!
- Congratulations to Luke and Ingrid Amstutz on the birth of their son Titus Benjamin Amstutz!