

# Annual Report

## 2022



**First Evangelical  
Free Church**

2696 HAZELWOOD STREET  
MAPLEWOOD, MN 55109  
[WWW.FIRSTEFC.ORG](http://WWW.FIRSTEFC.ORG)

WE EXIST TO GLORIFY GOD BY MAKING AND MATURING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST  
TO MINISTER TO THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

# Elder Board

Eric Berglund

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The beginning of the year included much prayer and discussion around the constitution and bylaw changes that were introduced throughout 2021. We interacted with many of you about these changes. With the final congregational approval at the Feb. 2022 Congregational Meeting, we were pleased to look ahead with renewed focus on our responsibility to serve Christ by establishing and clarifying the mission, values, vision and direction of First Free.

One exciting addition to our meeting schedule was to invite a different ministry leader to visit with the Elder Board each month. Our goal has been to **better understand the needs of our church ministries**, areas where additional resources or support might be needed and to pray for our leaders and their ministries. It has been a very encouraging time for the Elders to have this personal interaction, and we trust it has been encouraging to those leaders too. If we haven't gotten to your ministry area yet, we will!

We continue to discuss ways we can enhance the Board's shepherding of the flock at First Free. We know many of you are connected with Mini Congregations, Small Groups, and Bible Studies, and we hope you are thriving in those settings. We have a deep desire for those who may not have connected with anyone to find **meaningful relationship** within our church family and pray that we as leaders would know who you are and how we may care for you. The Elder Board also discusses a variety of other matters regularly such as facilities, security, finances, missions, staff development, church planting, etc.

We recently witnessed the successful completion of Cassia's capital campaign to support the Rev. William J. Hamel Chapel at Harmony Gardens. A special note of thanks to Jon Addington, Marty and Sandy Dennison, Kari Berglund and others within the EFCA and Cassia who served on the capital campaign committee. The last dollars of the \$400,000 campaign came in on the last day of the year! We saw the Lord's hand working in the hearts of so many, including those who helped with the move of residents from New Harmony to Harmony Gardens in Dec. 2022. Thanks be to God for his provision! We look forward to ongoing ministry at Harmony Gardens.

We are grateful to Pastor Bruce for his leadership during Pastor Todd's sabbatical and for all the pastors and staff for serving us so well each week.

The Elder Board appreciates your thoughts and values your prayers. Please keep communicating with us. We are excited to see what our Lord has in store for First Free in 2023! *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* Rom. 15:13

Humbly submitted by Eric Berglund on behalf of the 2022 Elder Board:

Mike Anderson, Eric Berglund, Kevin Brown, John Choe, Marty Dennison, Randy Gnadke, Jake Higgins, Tim Lindquist, Paul Rothermel and Pastor Todd Olson

# Senior Pastor

Dr. Todd Olson

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Looking back at 2022, it was definitely a stabilizing year coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also a year of growth and excitement as more people came back to church and many new individuals and families made First Free their church home. Throughout the year, a team of congregants worked on a renewed Vision Pathway which strongly affirmed our current Mission Statement: *We exist to glorify God by making and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ to minister to the world with the gospel by the Holy Spirit.* We also resonated with and want to focus our future attention around the concept of **CONNECTING**:

Connecting with God through His Son, Jesus Christ  
Connecting with His Word  
Connecting with one another  
Connecting with those around us in our world who need Jesus

In all that we do as a church, we want to **GLORIFY** God, **GROW** in our relationship with the Lord and each other, and **GO** out into the world on mission with the gospel. Pray that we as a church can press ahead in these Biblical and practical aspirations as a church family together.

We are grateful to Eric Berglund, Paul Rothermel and Randy Gnadke who finished terms on our Elder Board. Our only staff changes were within our worship ministry as noted below.

The preaching ministry at First Free in 2022 was primarily focused on the completion of our expositional series through the Book of Acts, plus the normal seasonal foci during Easter and Advent leading into Christmas. Pastor Bruce coordinated the preaching schedule with many wonderful servants opening God's Word for our church family during May, June and July while I was on sabbatical. Thanks to Bruce and everyone who filled the pulpit on Sunday mornings.

## Worship Ministry

We want to thank André Venter for his ministry of worship at First Free for the past couple years. His leadership role ended in Summer 2022. We also thank Brittany Quinn for her part-time and then full-time ministry of worship in 2022.

I am grateful for the tremendous promise of Romans 8:31-32 where it is written: *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

What a great promise as we look back and give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness in 2022 and ahead to His continued grace in giving us all we need as a church family in the year ahead of us.

Together for the Gospel,  
Pastor Todd

# Executive Pastor

Bruce Henry

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I had the privilege of assisting Pastor Todd and serving First Free in new ways in 2022. Moving from the title of Connections Pastor to Executive Pastor and adding new responsibilities brought additional joy and fulfillment to me as I sought to serve Jesus Christ here in this church family.

Though the role of Executive Pastor is slightly different in every church, my objective was to assist the Senior Pastor in overseeing the direction and life of the church including strategic planning, ministry programming and human resources in order to achieve its mission and vision under the direction of the Elder Board. Generally, I sought to help in **vision casting** and goal setting for the church, supervising and encouraging the pastoral staff, assisting in the pastoral care of the members and attendees of our church, attending leadership meetings, preaching a number of times, and actively helping lead the church during the Senior Pastor's sabbatical.

Additionally, my duties included assisting Pastor Todd in designing, clarifying and executing the church's goals and objectives, looking for new ways of organizing and operating ministries that could increase our church's **impact**, helping in the establishment of measurable objectives for pastors, trying to come up with ways and means for individuals to serve within the church, overseeing the ministries to visitors and for membership, and serving as needed with funerals and other ministry opportunities.

Thank you for the honor and opportunity of serving you, dear people. Let me close with these verses in Ephesians 1:15-23: *"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."*

## **Hospitality Ministry – Overseen by Jon & Louise Addington**

This team was 68 people strong in 2022 spanning ages 8 to 93. Focused on Sunday morning services, the team included greeters, ushers, and guest services hosts. Connect Cards were filled out by 79 family units who were brand new to First Free! From those initial handshakes, 43 family units (64 individuals) attended a FIRST Connection introductory meeting. Of our 79 visiting households in 2022, 48 of them have continued in attendance through year's end. Wow!

The team celebrated over a shared meal in May, praising and thanking God for the joy of serving Christ and the FEFC family. Our annual training was held in September, coordinated with Amy Brown as Faith Community Nurse and Pastor Nathan Greenwalt covering Security. Six team members attended the AED/CPR training in November.

# Pastor of Adult Ministries

Frank Lanier

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Adult Ministries serves men and women across a variety of adult seasons and group sizes. Hundreds of people are served every week with fellowship and growth in Christ.

## **Baptism**

One of the clearest commands from our Lord is to be baptized. We performed sixteen baptisms in 2022!

## **Discovering the Bible**

This multigenerational group met every Thursday and read through all of God's Word together. Discussion and exposition occurred via virtual and in-person class times led by Jon Addington. There is a wonderful spirit of growing and learning among the group.

## **Mini Congregations**

The **Bereans** met throughout the year and also hosted activities including a river cruise, Super Bowl party, mini golf, baseball game, and Christmas party. Sunday teachings were handled by Joe Pine, Bruce Thurber, Bill Nettekoven and Tom Greenlee with special attention and hands-on help given to prayer needs. The **Body Builders** have been studying through the writings of Apostle John and are currently engaged in the Book of Revelation combined with fellowship outside of class. Our **@the.CORE** class has begun meeting weekly (except for fifth Sundays), and this has bolstered attendance with several new families. **Koinonia** has been studying Thessalonians led by John Bronson, Revelation led by David Johnson, and Jonah led by Gary Watts. Attendance has been steady with some friendly newcomers replacing several of our members who have gone home to be with the Lord recently. Prayer time remains a vibrant part of class. Meeting during first hour on Sunday mornings, the **Theological Essentials Class** has been a well-attended exploration of major Christian doctrine. Pastor Frank covered Bible passages on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Bible, salvation, humanity, sin, the EFCA Statement of Faith, and developing a personal doctrinal summary for each participant. That class will conclude in Spring 2023.

## **Small Groups**

Our church has grown to include 26 active small groups. Many new individuals and families are joining our church family with strong encouragement to get deeply connected by joining one of these close-knit groups.

## **Young Adults**

The Fellowship is a vibrant group of young people age 18 and up. The group is officially three years old now. We used a curriculum called *Discipleship Explored* this past year and saw a number of new people join. God has pushed them to step up at a time when being a Christian in the real world is not easy.



## Adult Ministries (continued)

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### **Men's Study & Prayer**

**Men At Work** is led by Pastor Frank. We meet on Monday nights to grow in knowledge and wisdom with the purpose of sharing our devotion for God with the world. These men are passionately sharpening one another for kingdom work. This year's studies included *Respectable Sins* and the video series, *The Chosen*. Our other main study, **Bible Study and Fellowship**, is led by Marty Dennison and Jim Kirkpatrick. They rigorously studied the book of Matthew, and many men report that this study is greatly edifying. Our faithful **Men's Prayer Team** continues to meet on Thursday mornings. They bring requests to God concerning our church, community and world. They also enjoy breakfast together quite frequently afterward!

### **Men's Ministry Team – Overseen by Matthew Wellendorf**

We exist to facilitate fellowship, spiritual growth, and discipleship among the men of First Free. Our team includes Dave Gall, Charles Garcia, Frank Lanier, Tad Kastman, Andrew Panek, Ron Virnala, Kevin Watters, and Matthew Wellendorf. We continue to pray for the Lord to lead us in helping the men of First Free become leaders in their families, their communities, and their church.

- **Steak Out** – This beloved First Free tradition was bolstered by the addition of axe-throwing. Former NFL Coach Rick Dennison spoke about his faith journey. Our largest attendance yet!
- **Quarterly Breakfasts** – Our traditional breakfasts continued with wonderful teachers. Ron Virnala and Pastor Frank shared their testimonies, Tad Kastman spoke on biblical financial wellness, John Bronson taught about one-on-one mentorship, and Rick Hathaway recounted how God showed up in multiple ways after a tree-trimming accident. We have loved having some teens (14+) join us.

### **Women's Ministry Team – Overseen by Paige Garcia**

The heart of the Women's Ministry Team is to see God's glory on display by making and maturing disciples, providing opportunities to know His character and work, developing relationships with other women, and encouraging ladies in our church. It is with joy and love that team members Jeannine Brown, Karen Choe, Paige Garcia, Mandy Peterson and Grace Wellendorf serve the Lord and the women of our church. We give Him all praise and glory for leading our plans, providing many servants and for all the work He has done.

- **Bible Studies** – Over 200 women from First Free and other churches attend classes. We are grateful for our leaders who conduct studies (both in-person and virtually) and for the deep desire that women have to grow in His Word and support one another in prayer.
- **Titus 2 Mentoring Ministry** – This ministry is an encouragement to both younger and older women who seek to grow and be encouraged alongside one another.
- **Northwoods Moms** – We welcomed a new ministry which provides fellowship opportunities and friendship connections for both moms and their children ages 0 – 5.
- **Ladies Night** – Two events were held this year: a fun large group gathering featuring games and smaller group gatherings in homes. These are great opportunities to connect with new women!
- **Fall Kickoff** – This year's theme was *Thirst No More*. It was a wonderful morning of food, fellowship, worship and teaching from Janet Hohenstein.
- **Encouragement Ministry** – This year, over 50 cards were sent to the women at First Free who have lost loved ones recently or who are in the midst of a difficult time.

# Pastor of Administration

Nathan Greenwalt

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I cannot express enough thanks to the Support Staff of First Free. They each bring a breadth of experience along with wisdom and servant hearts to make church programs and ministries run smoothly. Chris Keller, Croix Menzel, and Grace Wellendorf make up an amazing and creative team that I love to work alongside and First Free is blessed to have. Thank you also to Kari Berglund and Kendra Madison for serving so well in Accounting. Our office people are incredible!

It is also important to mention the hard work Tara Larsen performs for our church family. Not only is she a dedicated steward of the many volumes we offer in our awesome Library, but she is also the keeper of the church facility calendar. This job is critical to smooth coordination of programming and facility use.

## **Car Care**

Car Care remains an important ministry in our community. While being lovingly presented with a gospel message, 8 - 10 individuals are served each month and introduced to the compassionate love of Christ in a tangible way. While they wait and fellowship, our many volunteers perform needed repairs and help provide reliable transportation.

We praise the Lord for His continued provision as 2022 inspired some new mechanics to join our ranks. Thank you, Rick Hathaway, for continuing to graciously lead and serve in this ministry!

Pray that this ministry remains strong and continues to be a witness in our community. I invite anyone (men and women) interested to learn more about what we do on the second Saturday of each month. Our volunteers really have a beautiful sense of camaraderie and teamwork as they serve shoulder-to-shoulder for the Lord.

## **Facilities – *Overseen by Bill Meyer***

This is the first year in a few that we haven't undertaken a large-scale renovation project in our terrific facility. Even though there are many opportunities for updates, this break has been a nice pause in the steady pace of construction the last several years offered. Through your loving gifts and resources from memorial funds, we were able to have a new floor surface installed in the Gym. This new product is more comfortable and safer for sports activities, and it is much easier to clean than the old floor!

Our church family and leadership are thankful for the generous custodial staff who are dedicated to keeping the property clean and ready for ministry to occur. It has been exciting to watch programming return to pre-Covid-19 levels, and even begin to increase as leaders develop new opportunities to draw our church body together to grow stronger in Christ.

## Administration (continued)

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### **Library – Overseen by Tara Larsen**

The purpose of our Church Library is stated in the Library's mission statement: *To support the mission of First Evangelical Free Church by assisting in the labor of spreading the Gospel for the salvation of souls and for the edification and growth of believers.*

The ministry of the First Free Library and the CD Ministry continue to serve people of all ages. For a few years, I have been praying specifically for families to utilize our Library. In 2022, **seventy-seven new patrons** were added to our database. Our visible and easy access from the lobby draws people in to browse and utilize the Library. I especially love that the teenagers choose the space to meet up with their friends in between services.

Children enjoy the ministry of the Library throughout the year. We had forty kids who participated in the *Summer Reading Program*. There is always a love for the well-stocked Prize Shop. One of my favorite weekly tasks is reading for the Mom's Day Away Program's Story Time. Selecting books to coincide with their daily theme is a joy. The preschoolers get to check out books and it's so fun to see what they choose! Each Sunday School class has an assigned week each month to visit the Library, too.

*Stocking the Shelves* occurred on Nov. 13 and is always our largest time of acquisition. Congregants purchased 121 items for our collection through this annual event. Donors were so generous toward new titles and I'm still working processing them!

We currently have **10,496 items** available for checkout while I'm readying new titles. As our founding librarian once stated, "the Church Library is not for the sake of a collection or for full shelves, but rather that the books might be read and be of help in illuminating the Scriptures, enabling Christians to apply God's truths in their lives".

Our CD Ministry reproduces sermons for those who were absent from church, homebound, or want to pass along the message to others. There is a weekly demand of sermon CDs, but many patrons access the message through our livestreamed service.

After fifteen years in my role, I know the importance of the faithful volunteers He has provided: Nancy Beich, Mary Janssen, Cindy Johnson, Marsha Kastman, Michelle Pratt, Nan Schutz, Keturah Rothermel, and Rose Wald. I hear often how rare it is for a church to have a Library like ours. It's given me a wonderful opportunity to get to know so many in our church body. Thank you for utilizing this ministry resource.



# Cultivate: Church | Network | Movement

*Cultivating the Way of Jesus in Everyday Life*

Steve Erickson – First Free’s Church Planting Missionary

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Let me begin by saying THANK YOU, we love you and are so grateful for your partnership in our mission. We have had a very fruitful year of sowing and reaping. At this time last year, we were working towards starting our first MicroChurch. By God’s grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, our Network has grown to **ten MicroChurches!** I cannot put into words how it feels to have a clear call and vision from the Lord, and then labor and toil for months and months until the seeds finally take root and spring forth. Though we have seen a great advance in our disciple making efforts, we are far from done. Our goal is to saturate the entire Twin Cities Metro with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Each of our MicroChurches are a unique expression of what it means to engage in worship, community, and mission together. I meet with our MicroChurch leaders weekly for prayer, encouragement, coaching, and training. All our MicroChurches are centered on an organizing principle of making and multiplying disciples. We are reaching a wide variety of people in the everyday places and spaces of life. We also have great freedom and flexibility in the way that we structure our mission.

Some MicroChurches take a Sunday morning and go out into the community to serve together, putting into practice the things that we learn in our Bible teaching times. We also have done some outreaches including a s’more party that gave us an opportunity to hang out with unbelieving neighbors so that we can build bridges to the gospel with them. Along with our Sunday gatherings, we also have small discipleship groups that meet throughout the week that provide an opportunity to engage in deeper disciple making. In November, we had our **first all-network gathering** at the Crossroads Chapel at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. It was a night of great encouragement as many of the members of the various MicroChurches had never met each other before; they are spread all throughout the metro.

We are excited for all that the Lord will do in and through us in 2023! We don’t want to just plant a church, but start a movement of gospel saturation. We can’t do it alone – We need you!! There are three ways you can help:

1. **Pray for Us** – Every great gospel movement in history was preceded by a prayer movement. If we are to fulfill the mission we have been called to, we must saturate our work with prayer. Join our prayer team today: <https://mailchi.mp/db23edb2b87c/mission-updates>.
2. **Partner with Us** – Our work is a true missionary endeavor and will require the generous financial support of Christ followers who long to see the gospel advance in this city. Prayerfully consider providing financial fuel for our mission: <https://give.idonate.com/cultivate-network/cultivate-church>.
3. **Participate in Our Mission** – Prayerfully consider participating in mission projects and/or joining our Strike Team. We want to explore how God may be leading you to join His mission in Saint Paul.

I would love to share more about our unique mission. To learn more, reach out to me at 952.270.1273 or [steve@cultivatecpc.com](mailto:steve@cultivatecpc.com). Thank you for your investment in God’s Kingdom. The best is yet to come!

# Pastor of Youth and Families

Dr. Kenny King

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Our church highly values children, youth and families. Young people yearn to experience belonging, support and growth on their walks with Jesus. Their parents also experience encouragement from each other and this church family. Kirsten and I feel great support for this ministry area and appreciate the ways this includes our families in church life. We have seen the Lord work as He brought a number of new students and families in 2022. We seek to provide opportunities for growth in our students' relationships with Jesus Christ, one another and caring adults in an environment that is safe and inclusive. Our **Family Ministry Team** has effectively carried on this work at First Free:

- **Abby Beard** – Director of Mid-Week Children's Discipleship
- **Tonya Dahl** – Director of Early Childhood Discipleship
- **Annabelle "Belle" Flener** – Children's Ministry Assistant
- **Kari Gravley** – Director of Kids' Choir
- **Stephen Gravley** – Director of Sunday Elementary Discipleship
- **Kirsten King** – Director of Youth Discipleship and Training
- **Croix Menzel** – Administrative Assistant for Family Ministries

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD DISCIPLESHIP (*SUNDAY – NORTHWOODS*)**

- **New Growth** – We continue to see many new, young families and new additions to current families.
- **Room Changes** – To accommodate a growing number of toddler-age children, our rooms have converted into the following breakdowns: Chipmunks (0 – 18 months), Otters (19 – 24 months), Foxes (25 – 36 months) and Moose (3 – 5 years).
- **Curriculum** – We continue to use the *Gospel Project* curriculum. It is also used at Expedition on Wednesday nights. This means all our kids are experiencing the same Bible lesson each week geared for their individual ages.
- **Volunteers** – We currently have 60+ volunteers serving regularly each month on Sunday mornings with several serving multiple weeks in a month. Numerous people also substitute. I'm so grateful for these amazing servants who give faithfully of their time and talents.

## **ELEMENTARY DISCIPLESHIP (*SUNDAY – KIDS' CAMP*)**

- **Kids' Choir** – We have ~40 members in Kindergarten through sixth grade.
- **Wake-up Worship** – A great way to wake up and worship our Lord!
- **Chapel Time** – Kindergarten through second grade uses the *Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum to walk through the Bible in chronological order.
- **Sunday School** – Kindergarten through sixth grade uses biblically-deep curricula including *Truth78* and *Precept Ministries*.
- **Connected Families** – We had a successful workshop in March about the power of questions. This Christ-centered ministry helps build strong communication within families.
- **Volunteers** – Over 50 amazing volunteers faithfully bring the joy they have in Jesus to the children of First Free. They include choir and chapel helpers, game and snack coordinators, security personnel and our many teachers.

# Youth and Families (continued)

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## CHILDREN'S OUTREACH

- **Festival** – We hosted our community during the Fourth of July fireworks with snacks, food trucks, and popcorn. Over 200 church swag bags were given to kids with activities and VBS invitations inside.
- **VBS** – Vacation Bible School 2022 was *Zoomarang*, and it was so fun! We had 150 kids and 100 volunteers for a week of learning about how God sees the value of each life. Our church is so blessed by all those who serve our VBS program year after year!
- **Expedition** – In 2022, our Wednesday night programming really dove into teaching kids how to be the hands and feet of Jesus with an emphasis on hands-on learning. We have ~65 kids attending regularly with 25 amazing volunteers! This mid-week opportunity gathers us to learn more about God and His Word while having so much fun. We continue to encourage kids to really know God's Word by memorizing verses and ensuring each child has a Bible for them to read at home.
- **Touch-A-Truck** – This new fall event was a great success! We were able to have a few large vehicles (cement trucks and buses) and multiple cars with decorated trunks hosted by our church families. We had lots of families, both from our church body and the community.

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

- **Sr. High Sunday School** – This year we studied the Book of Mark! Thanks to Kirsten King, Dave Gustafson and Marie Peters for being part of our teaching team.
- **Jr. High Sunday School** – "Foundations" classes establish a basis for understanding and using our Bibles every day. In 2022, we surveyed the New Testament and studied Christian doctrine. Thanks to Belle Flener, Dwight Reynolds, and Lori Juvland for your teaching!
- **Youth Group** – Our mid-week study is essential for evangelism and discipleship. The comfortable, family-feel environment of the Youth Centers create an ample space to grow. We play active games, hang out on the couch, spend time together in worship and eat great snacks. This year we studied through 2 Peter during large group and *The Person of Peter* for small group.
- **Youth Ministry Leaders** – These studies and relationships happen because of our fantastic team. Thanks to Sr. High Leaders Kari Berglund, Gwen Malcolm, Liz Nelson, Kirsten King, Marie Peters, Kassy Gustafson, Tim Lindquist, Brad Gustafson, and Andy Waller and Jr. High Leaders Sharon Ericksen, Belle Flener, Lori Juvland, Paul Junker, Tawnya Marek, Michael Johnson, Zach Ostlund, Joey Fasulo and Dwight Reynolds. Bob & Carmen Lepley are Youth Ministry Partners who meet the needs of our leaders and kids through prayer and care. Their perspective and maturity is priceless!
- **Prayer Calendar** – Kirsten and I have been overwhelmed by the responsiveness of those who have been praying through the list of students and leaders sent out on this monthly calendar. Thanks so much for your faithfulness and know that the Lord is at work in students' lives. "... *Know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*" 1 Cor. 15:58
- **Administrative Assistant to Family Ministries** – Croix serves in the areas of communications, graphic design, database management, digital tools and ministry support. Croix keeps our parents and their kids informed with amazing clarity. We couldn't do what we do without him!
- **Adjunct Teaching** – I had the privilege of teaching undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Northwestern during the fall and spring terms. The courses were *Leading Youth and Emerging Adults* and *Preaching and Worship*. I appreciate that our Elders and pastoral staff support this opportunity to equip the next generation of Christian leaders.

# Global Impact Team (Missions)

Brett Rosso

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The Global Impact Team (GIT) works to fulfill the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19) by coordinating with sending organizations, Global Partners and our congregation. The 2022 GIT had the following members: Gib Coleman, Marty & Sandy Dennison, Charles & Maridee Farrow, Brian Finley, Karen Gustafson, Josh & Lauren Maske, Chris Keller, Pastor Todd Olson and Brett Rosso. After many years of service to the GIT, Brian stepped down in February. We are thankful for his prayerful dedication to missions around the world. We were excited to add new members Karen, Josh and Lauren to the team halfway through 2022 and have already benefited from their focus on the Great Commission. Pastor Todd and Chris continue to represent the church staff and gladly take on the extra responsibilities this sometimes entails.

## Events

Global Impact Sunday was held in late February and the main speaker was Cru's Vice President for North America and Oceania, Mark Gauthier. The title of his sermon was *The Mission of God*. Global Partners Todd and Christine Mathews were the primary speakers in the Youth Center and we got a ministry update from Global Partner Matt Halseth as well. Later that evening, Mark came back to share details about Cru's efforts around the globe and to provide some question and answer time.

## Short Term Trips

This past year saw the return of a few short term trips. A dedicated group went to serve the ReachGlobal European conference to provide childcare and a Vacation Bible School program. A few people went on short term trips based on prior experience which included teaching in the Middle East.

## Prayer

Each Sunday morning, a Global Partner was highlighted at the beginning of the Sunday service. This included a slide with their picture and a brief overview of their ministry followed by prayer on their behalf.

## Global Partners

The GIT was pleased to have Global Partners attend our meetings as guests. These meetings provide great opportunities for them to share what is on their hearts, how their ministries are changing and growing, and to provide in-person care and support for these hardworking individuals. Situations in our changing world often resulted in multiple Global Partners attending the same meeting.

Mike and Amanda Keller also concluded **15 years of service** with English Language Institute of China (ELIC) in 2022. We are thankful for their obedience to God's call to serve in East Asia and to pour their lives into university students. We pray for their transition into life here in Minnesota.

We also added two new families as Global Partners. Ebi and Esther Perinbaraj recently completed their degrees at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in preparation for ministry with ReachGlobal as church planters in South Asia. Norm and Kristy Hubbard serve with Navigators on local college campuses and attend First Free. Our church has been blessed by Norm's gifted preaching.

Please continue to pray for our Global Partners!

# Faith Community Nurse

Amy Brown

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Thank you for support of the Faith Community Nurse ministry in 2022. It is a privilege to serve, working closely with ministry leaders to coordinate and meet the health and spiritual life needs of the congregation. Our foci this year included beginning a new caregiver support group ministry, congregational health and safety, and visitation to seniors (55+) amid a transition or health care crisis.

## Caregiver Ministry

We began a new ministry in Sep. 2022 to encourage and provide education to caregivers with a parallel group for care recipients where they enjoy physical, mental, and spiritual activities prepared for them. The need for this ministry has been longstanding. We are so thankful to God for providing Louise Addington to co-lead the caregiver group and Mary Schultz to lead the care recipient group along with support from Katie Nice and Dave & Diana Knutzen.

## Visitation

A total of **27 health visits** occurred within 17 family units, of which 20 were via telephone and seven were in person. These are primarily one-time visits focused on health and living transitions. We provide resources or education regarding a plan of care. It is encouraging to partner with the visitation team of Debbie Anderson and Louise Addington along with the homebound team led by Jackie Pickar.

## Congregational Health and Safety

- **Emergency Medical Response** – We began offering CPR/AED certification to ministry workers that would be most likely to encounter medical emergencies. A total of sixteen people completed the November course. We also initiated a Sunday morning medical emergency response team comprised of thirteen medical professionals who attend First Free.
- **First Aid / AED** – Our kits and units were regularly checked and restocked.
- **Pandemic Response** – We continued to communicate and educate by request rather than a congregation-wide approach as in 2020 and 2021. We also stopped contact tracing and providing congregational notifications in April due to the shift to an endemic, encouraging individuals to contact close contacts from a courtesy perspective. From January through April, there were a total of four potential exposures during church events and thirteen individuals for contract tracing calls.

## GriefShare

Carolyn Schultz, Diane Johnson, and Jan Pitman coordinate and facilitate the program at our church. There were two complete sessions in 2022 with **28 attendees** in our spring and fall sessions. It is a 13-week video series of scripture-based help for those grieving the death of a loved one. More than half of the participants are not from our church, and several individuals started attending First Free after attending these classes from the spiritual encouragement and emotional healing they have received.

*"Seeking together to build up the body of Christ by contributing to needs ... rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep." – Rom. 12:13,15*

# Deacon Reports

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## **Harvest Gardens – Overseen by Jon Addington**

Our community gardens provided a unique outreach opportunity for First Free for our thirteenth season. The Harvest Gardens ministry seeks to build a bridge to the community, welcome the immigrant, feed the hungry and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ while sharing His story.

Plots were provided to **700 gardeners** and their families with tools, water and finished compost. Most gardeners continue to come from the Asian community with many first-and-second-generation refugee immigrants. For the second year, we hosted a Bike Giveaway in which **90 used and new bicycles** were provided to gardeners and their children. We also had another great summer with the Garden Kids Bible Club. The children of many of our gardeners came on Tuesday evenings as fourteen terrific volunteers sang, created fun crafts, played sports, and told Bible stories based on the “I Ams” of Christ in the book of John.

Special thanks to:

- Rachel Hardacre for leading the Giving Garden ministry
- Dave Peterson for providing oversight many days through the summer
- Jim Winberg, Kent Thompson and Kevin Johnson for collecting garbage and moving plant waste for composting each Wednesday morning
- Rob and Mary Osterlund for leading the Garden Kids Bible Club
- Mary Vangen and Lori Felton for leading the Bike Giveaway Day
- Grace Wellendorf for skillfully handling communications with gardeners as they call the Church Office
- All those who participated sacrificially to make this ministry a reality

One of the greatest blessings is the bond created when working side by side in service to the community. To God be the glory.

## **Giving Garden – Overseen by Bill Freiling and John Chelstrom**

The Giving Garden is a 30'x30' garden plot at Harvest Gardens on County Road C. All of the produce grown on the Giving Garden plot is delivered to our local Salvation Army in Maplewood. All ages and abilities are welcome to join! We donated **628.5 pounds of fresh produce** during the 2022 season: our heaviest harvest ever. The year was a challenge due to a cold start in May followed by a hot dry summer which required almost daily watering. We are grateful for God's blessing to our community in reaching families in need with fresh vegetables. I'm also thankful for the great team we had last year and their dedication to preparing, planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting. I look forward to 2023 as we assemble another team to dig into the ground.



## Deacon Reports (continued)

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### **Visitation – Overseen by Louise Addington and Debbie Anderson**

It is our joy and calling to minister to the body of Christ for a sixth full year, being sensitive to the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit in leading us. We thank the Lord that Katie Nice and Barb Fontana have joined our team. We have found joy working closely with Amy Brown (Faith Community Nurse) and Jackie Pickar (Homebound Ministry). Several others have helped by making phone calls in their Small Groups and Mini Congregations. We understand that the body of Christ together is doing this work of caring for each other.

It is our desire to offer spiritual care to people in all stages of life by bringing scripture, prayer, encouragement and support. This care happens for all ages during life crises, transitions, and at the end of life. We minister through in-person visits, phone calls/texts, cards, meals, practical help and referrals to resources, ministries and/or pastors. **In 2022, we have cared for 154 people with 113 in person visits, 96 cards, 116 calls/texts, 41 emails, 12 meals and 4 rides.** Thank you for all the ways you have cared for each other too – by calling those you haven't seen for a while, visiting someone in the hospital or preparing a meal for a friend. We know the body of Christ loves and cares for each other. This is a powerful testimony of the reality and presence of God among us. Let us continue to help and encourage one another so that we can all finish well! May God bless you for your specific part in building up the body of Christ at First Free.

### **Widow / Widower Ministry – Overseen by Karen Choe**

This ministry answers God's call for believers to meet the needs of the widows/widowers in our midst according to Deut. 10:18. At the end of 2022, there were **81 widows and widowers** listed at First Free. In 2022, seven brothers and sisters in our group passed away. We also joyfully 'lost' a sister who remarried. Eleven people lost their spouses in 2022, so their names were added to our list.

- **Meet Spiritual Needs** – John and Karen Choe's daytime small group meets on the east side of Saint Paul, and many of the members are from the Widows and Widowers Ministry.
- **Service Activities** – We sent care packages and cards to Global Partners, folded laundry at the Union Gospel Mission, and packed boxes for Operation Christmas Child.
- **Social Activities** – We attended a movie matinee, visited Munsinger Gardens and took a train ride through Osceola.
- **Meals Together** – We had lunches together on Valentine's Day and by the lake on a summer day. We also hosted a picnic at Pastor Olson's house and a pastor/staff appreciation lunch at church.
- **Physical Needs** – We meet the tangible needs of individuals in the group as requests are made. Some of the help given this year includes replacement of a garage door opener, railing and light fixture installation and furniture assembly.
- **Communication** – We let our group know about our ministry via the *First Look* quarterly newsletter, Weekly News and personal emails, Sunday bulletin and Christmas and birthday cards.

The core group who plans these activities includes John & Karen Choe, Rose Wald, Carol Wickstrom, Janice Johnson and Craig Tator along with support from Pastor Todd & Sharon Olson and Pastor Frank Lanier. We thank God for His leading, the church leaders for being open to the Spirit's leading to meet His mandates, and individuals from the group who stepped up to help. We pray for physical and mental wellness of the Widows and Widowers and that they will feel the sustaining love of God in their lives (Isa. 46:4).

# Congregational Statistics

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## Current Church Membership

456

## Weddings (1)

Noah Flener & Annabelle Holman (10.8.22)

## Child Dedications (16)

Genesis "Gigi" Beard (Joe & Abby)

Madelyn Regehr (Emma)

Margot Crim (Josh & Laura)

Florence, Beverly & Imogene Lipps (Jimmy & Megan)

Reggie Long (Luke & Kristy)

Elias Olson (Caleb & Julia)

Leif Olson (Luke & Macai)

Grace Peterson (Bill & Mandy)

Mason Radcliffe (Koby & Jessica)

Sawyer Ritenour (Tom & Vanessa)

Ida Rosso (Brett & Amanda)

Hadley Tolzmann (Andrew & Monica)

Oliver & Owen Waller (Andy & Alyssa)

## Baptisms (16)

Christl Board

Carolyn Dossier

Lily Fones

Becca Higgins

Isaiah Iverson

Mary Lipps

Sara Muchowski

Tucker Mixon

Theo Olson

Eli Schaefer

Ruth Schaefer

Tom Ritenour

Vanessa Ritenour

Alyssa Waller

Grace Wellendorf

Matt Wellendorf

## New Members (29)

Doug & Cheryl Conrad

Josh & Laura Crim

Bruce & Cilla Fischer (*Member Reinstatement*)

Mike & Susan Grams

Jim Hidy & Mary Skupa

Brittani Hofer

Eric & Judy Iverson

Daniel & Barbara Larson

Tom & Tawnya Marek

Gary & Carol McLean

Emily McLean

Tucker Mixon

Diane Orsello

Emma Ostlund

George & Judy Palke

Scott & Stacy Schaefer

Jake & Marie Warkentin

## Deaths (19)

Mary Beth Selin (1.25.22)

Lucy Baker (2.10.22)

Dick Oertwich (3.23.22)

Dorothy Westholm (3.29.22)

Richard Folden (4.10.22)

Carol Woodbury (5.27.22)

Faye Oakes (6.3.22)

Myrt Pyche (7.1.22)

Norma Anderson (8.9.22)

Carol Erdman (10.3.22)

Theresa Hilber (10.10.22)

Ramona Richardson (10.31.22)

Dave Liukonen (11.3.22)

Marian Oman (11.17.22)

Audrey Behymer (11.27.22)

Barb Freiling (12.10.22)

Cleone Dotseth (12.23.22)

Jerry Lindahl (12.27.22)

Lynn Lindquist (12.29.22)

FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
GENERAL FUND BUDGET VS. ACTUAL  
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022

Actual	Budget	Over/(Under) Budget	Line Description
\$1,261,067	\$1,329,800	(\$68,733)	Compensation/Benefits
\$76,854	\$85,500	(\$8,646)	Leadership Development
\$328,800	\$293,050	\$35,750	Missions & Outreach
\$1,068	\$8,250	(\$7,182)	Outreach & Assimilation
\$15,945	\$17,000	(\$1,055)	Worship & Music
\$20,886	\$30,400	(\$9,514)	Community Life
\$337	\$8,700	(\$8,363)	Adult Discipleship
\$39,970	\$41,350	(\$1,380)	Youth & Family
\$48,200	\$68,450	(\$20,250)	Office & Communication Resources
\$167,500	\$197,000	(\$29,500)	Property & Facilities
\$1,960,627	\$2,079,500	(\$118,873)	Total General Fund Expenses

FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
BALANCE SHEET  
AS OF JUNE 30, 2022

	General Fund	Harvest Campus Dev Fund	Care Fund	Missions Project Fund	Memorials/ Other	COMBINED TOTAL
<b>ASSETS</b>						
Cash	\$351,070	\$1,661,543	\$23,940	\$68,028	\$667,374	\$2,771,955
Fixed Assets	\$14,900	\$1,613,670			\$827,314	\$2,455,884
Other Assets		\$284,654				\$284,654
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$365,970</b>	<b>\$3,559,867</b>	<b>\$23,940</b>	<b>\$68,028</b>	<b>\$1,494,688</b>	<b>\$5,512,493</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
Mortgages	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Liabilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>EQUITY BALANCE</b>	<b>\$365,970</b>	<b>\$3,559,867</b>	<b>\$23,940</b>	<b>\$68,028</b>	<b>\$1,494,688</b>	<b>\$5,512,493</b>
<b>CHANGE IN CASH</b>						
Beginning Balance	\$503,099	\$1,538,985	\$15,329	\$77,183	\$460,022	\$2,594,618
Receipts	\$1,990,199	\$28,824	\$23,138	\$57,993	\$751,867	\$2,852,021
Expenditures	\$1,959,688	\$133,608	\$23,000	\$72,468	\$237,427	\$2,426,191
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$533,610</b>	<b>\$1,434,201</b>	<b>\$15,467</b>	<b>\$62,708</b>	<b>\$974,462</b>	<b>\$3,020,448</b>