

Annual Report

2009-2010

First Evangelical Free Church

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Senior Pastor.....	3-4
Worship & Connecting Ministries	5-6
Zion Student Ministry	7
<i>Creekside Friends</i> Children’s Ministry	8-9
Parish Nurses	10
Church Council Report.....	11
Caring Commission	12
Nurture Commission	13
Worship Commission.....	14
Outreach Commission	15
Women’s Ministries	16-17
Finance and Property Board.....	18
Treasurer’s Report/Financial Statements.....	19-29

SENIOR PASTOR

Joel Sutton

After the nation of Israel captured the Promised Land and the land was divided up among the 12 tribes, Joshua, the leader, wraps it all up with a quick summary:

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. *Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.* (Joshua 21:43-45; NIV; italics mine)

I love that. Joshua reminds them of God's grace and God's faithfulness.

God has been good to us at First Free. He is gracious and faithful. And as we continue to move forward in Christ, I pray that we might always remember that His good promises will never fail.

Our Purpose: **First Evangelical Free Church exists to *Bring* people into a relationship with Jesus, *Connect* them to Jesus' family, *Mature* them as followers of Jesus, and *Equip* them to serve Jesus so that His name is *Exalted*.**

We desire to be a healthy church; a church that balances each of our five purposes. Our goal is not to just grow because "bigger is better." It is to grow because we want to reach more people for Christ and connect them to the body of Christ. It is to grow in maturity and obedience in our relationship to Christ and serve and love Him with our whole heart, mind, body, and soul.

So let me remind you once again of our dreams.

Our dream at First Free is to be a worshipping church, one which is leading more and more people into the very presence of God. Last spring our worship attendance averaged 463. Our summer attendance dropped to 347. And then this past fall and winter our attendance in both services averaged 442.

Last fall, Pastor Eric and I brought in a worship consultant to give us an outside perspective and help us think through how we could grow in our worship arts ministry. Out of those meetings, there have been some subtle, but significant changes in our Sunday morning worship. I believe we will continue to grow in this area. I want to thank all of our Sunday morning worship team – for their consistency, hard work, and time commitment as they lead us in *exalting* the name of Christ each Sunday.

Our dream is to be a church that works in partnership with you; enabling you to reach out with Christ's love to your unchurched friends and neighbors and *bring* them to Christ. We continue as a church to have a "faith goal" of seeing an annual 10% conversion growth. Last year, for the first time, we held "Street-Fest" in our parking lots during VBC week—inviting neighbors to join us for a party. One of our goals was to open the door to the community as to who we are and to cultivate relationships with them. It was a fun evening and a great success.

Our dream is that every attendee become *connected* to an Adult Bible Fellowship or small group in such a way that they belong and are known. This is a challenge. As we continue to grow, our space has become tight. Our nursery is full. Our children's classrooms are packed. Our student ministry is spilling out all over the building. Our ABFs continue to grow. This past year we added 24 new members. If we want to continue to reach people for Christ and connect them to the body of Christ, we will have to make some decisions and invest some finances to make that happen.

We dream of being a spiritually *maturing* body where each person is growing in their spiritual character of love, servanthood and godliness; becoming more like Christ on a daily basis. We are seeing this happen all over the place. Last summer we baptized 2 adults (in our first ever rained out Baptism/Picnic celebration). This past Easter Sunday we baptized 7 more adults. Each Sunday, I hear testimonies of what God is doing. In our leadership gatherings on the first Sunday of the month, we share stories of God sightings. What an exciting thing to see and hear and be part of God's work in lives!

We dream of being a church where each person is **equipped** to serve God, and they serve Him to the best of their strength. As I look around here on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, and during the week, I am thankful to God for each of you who serve. God uses you. This church would not be making any significant impact without you.

Not only am I thankful for all of you who volunteer, but I also am very thankful for those whom I partner with in the ministry here at First Evangelical Free Church. I continue to praise God with joy for Olivia Lueth and Karna Anderson in the office . . . for Pastor Eric, Pastor Mark, Beth Brown, Maureen Juarez, and Dee Huanca for all they do as ministry staff . . . for Scott Beckett and Julie Groethe in taking care of our church facilities. Please, keep these individuals and our ministry team in your prayers this next year.

I also want to thank Alan Peterson, Chairman of the Council. Alan and I spend a lot of time together and I appreciate his love for God, his wisdom, and his commitment to First Free. Continue to pray for Alan as well.

Let me finish with a brief mention of two big events that took place this past year. First, was the purchase of the house across the street at 5155 Chicago Ave. I had heard multiple times, over the years, how as a church we had attempted to purchase that house years ago. But God's timing is perfect and He is faithful. Second, was the 125th anniversary celebration of First Evangelical Free church last October. The key verse for that Sunday celebration came from Psalm 100:5, "*For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*" At First Free we say, "Amen."

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Joel Sutton

WORSHIP ARTS MINISTRY

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." - Romans 12:1

On a prayer retreat day back in June '09, I remember writing "God, please grow our worship ministry." As I look back, I see God's grace in our worship ministry as He provided us with a wise consultant, Sandy Johnson, who helps churches to improve their worship arts ministries. Much of the change we've implemented this year came from Sandy's suggestions. Here are a few of them:

1) Personnel Additions

- Because we added Karen Beckett as Technical Director halfway through the year, we were able to train and deploy 6 more volunteers behind the scenes, while sharpening our use of technology, particularly video. By having Karen take care of things off stage, I am able to pay attention to what is happening on stage and to leading the congregation. Karen in many ways takes over many of the roles brother Matt has filled the last 7 years. Matt remains one of our tech engineers. Thanks Matt!
- Phil Hintz, one of our interns, graciously took on leading the youth worship band and led in each of the Fresh Encounters.

2) Community Formation

- We held five worship ministry "dinners" (All-Team Meetings) which included some training and prayer and included the choir in 3 of these (Aug, Nov, Dec, Feb, May).
- We moved our 2 & 4-week rotations into a unified 3-week rotation for all technical, vocal, and instrumental teams.

3) Design Team

- I recruited a design team made up of artists, musical and non-, who are beginning to think more broadly about the Sunday morning experience. Working together creatively to support the morning message is a challenging but rewarding task. Elements this team created this past year that you may remember are:
 - Prayer during our Outreach Weekend service for children around the world, with a creative Scripture reading featuring 2 adults and a child.
 - A vocalist singing "It Is Well" with pictures of calamities flashing on the screen behind her after the message "What would Jesus say about . . . Calamities."
 - Cut-out animals onstage during the Christmas series: "Best Christmas: Peace on Earth"
 - A Christmas Eve service drama with 4 characters all coming to the Manger.
 - Filling out a spiritual self-assessment during the "12 Tests" series.
 - A Good Friday service with a scriptural "Stations of the Cross" that led us to experience the crucifixion in a new way.

4) Equipment Upgrade

- I assembled and proposed worship equipment upgrades for the sanctuary for the 2010-12 budget years.

As we seek to continue to experience God and express our worship to Him, I am thankful for the teams that serve with me week after week. Cheryl Polland, Jerry McDonald and the Cross-Generational orchestra played twice, and the results were inspiring! Rick Olson and the choir often left us with chills, or tears, or cheers. Barb Olson & Debbie Smith welcomed us into His presence with so many wonderful organ and piano preludes.

A team of us is planning on attending the National Worship Leader's Conference this July in Kansas.

Connection Ministry

I once again had the privilege of serving alongside several teams who help people feel connected to First Free Church:

Our "Welcome Force," which includes those who work at the Welcome Desk, ushers, greeters, and guest luncheons (we held 3 this year) continued in full strength as we welcomed many guests to services and events at the church. I am thankful

for Laura Radtke, John Lande, Gen Erickson, Donna Larson, and Cindy Larson for not only serving, but *leading* teams who serve. I am also thankful for all those who've stepped up to serve with them. We also appreciate Aaron & Melissa Rusnak who made our foyer more inviting by designing and redecorating.

Our Small Groups ministry experienced slow growth this past year. We held 2 small group launches. The fall launch gave us 2 new groups. Our relaunch in January gave us one new group. Overall, we had 12 groups that reported their attendance regularly (2 that did not), totaling between 90 and 100 individuals weekly, with a total enrollment of 136. We have planned small group training for twice a year and would like to increase the number of groups again this fall. We also are planning a leadership retreat this May to strategize how we will form and resource next year's groups.

This past year, I was involved in the formation of the Men's Fellowship group. Last May, three Olsons (Ross, Tim, and Rick), a Chapman and I met and decided to host monthly breakfasts. Attendance varied from 10-40. Many thanks to this team as well as Doug Nelson and Vince St. Clair for letting God use them to challenge men to follow Christ and grow in Him.

Gratefully submitted,

Eric Twietmeyer
Worship & Connecting Pastor

ZION STUDENT MINISTRY

God has been moving the Student Ministry in a very clear direction over the last year. This has been a direction of growth—growth in numbers—but much more importantly, growth in their devotion to God, growth in their devotion to others and growth in their desire to reach their friends.

The Jr. High Ministry started off strong with about 25 students; now we have around 50 students meeting weekly. These numbers are really exciting because this growth is not church transfer growth, but growth because kids are inviting their friends and then the friends that have come have invited their own friends as well.

A Jr. High student invited a friend who started coming and really loved youth group. He felt like this was a safe place to be. We had been teaching that you are never more like Christ than when you are caring for the hurting and lonely. This student who had been invited by a caring friend opened his eyes, and he saw a kid at his school who was hurting and lonely and befriended him. This student continued the friendship and one day, this new-found friend of his came to youth group. I wish you all could have been there to see the Jr. Highers pour the love on this kid. They let him know how glad they were that he came. Many of them were so excited to have him at youth group because they had been praying for him. During gym time that night there was a group of about 8 students hanging with this guy. He had shared some pretty tough stuff that he was going through and those students laid their hands on him and prayed for him—prayed prayers of healing, prayers of thanks, prayers of blessing—powerful prayers for this young man to their God. And they are only Jr. Highers! As I write this, my hair tingles and I feel the tears well up as I think about how God is using the students in our ministry. This student who came told me that night that even before he was invited to our youth group, he had heard about this place and wanted to come. He had heard it was a safe place where you could be real no matter what. WOW!

This story is just one of many stories like it that have come about as God is working in and through the students of First Evangelical Free Church. This story and the many like it would not be if not for the dedicated Youth Leaders who minister to the students, pray for, play goofy games with, cry with, laugh with, and care deeply for these students. I want to thank Luke Amstutz, Sarah Clinton, Jason Foster, Kim Foster, Phil Hintz, Chad Hollinbeck, Johanna Holliday, Sherie McClun, Mark Mellema, Patty Mellema, Melinda Meyers, Ben Nordell, Aaron Rusnak, Darcy Schbloom, Suzy Schbloom, Heather Stacey, Shane Stacey, and Flip Sward for being those consistent, caring leaders.

I want to thank Lori Peterson for making herself available to watch our little ones on Wednesdays and the nursery crew and Sunday school teachers who care for our little ones on Sundays. Thank you to the parents of these students who care for and love their sons and daughters so deeply. Many thanks also to all those who put so much time and energy into the New Years Eve outreach and the Terrace on Chicago. Most importantly, thanks to God who is the Head Pastor of First Evangelical Free Church, the one who works in and through us.

Grace and Peace,

Mark Meyers
Youth Pastor

CREEKSIDE FRIENDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

VACATION BIBLE CAMP

"CROCODILE DOCK... Where fearless kids shine God's light"

200 kids rocked the dock at VBC! It was a very powerful week with God at work in the lives of many children, volunteers, and families. This continues to be our largest outreach event as 64% of the children were not from First Free. Highlights included over 100 volunteers, including many youth (and even some adults who took time off work), great live music, a Jack Nordin ("man from the swamp") magic show, the Conrad family from Japan, and most importantly, kids praying to receive Christ! I love VBC!

SUNDAY MORNINGS

First Free families are blessed with teachers who faithfully teach our children during the whole school year. We see over 100 children on Sunday mornings.

NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL

Our nursery and preschool families experienced a new paging system, which we were so blessed to receive. Each parent is given a pager upon check-in, and this has been wonderful. Our parents continue to feel this is a safe and caring place for their children. These areas continue to be our busiest and fastest growing, and we love welcoming new babies and preschoolers. We are also blessed to have over 70 caregivers who serve our families on the nursery schedule.

Katie Goodman did a fantastic job as the administrator for the nursery through December and then Mallory Hueckman joined the nursery team (with Mary Bostrom and Becki Kobielush) in January. These three women do a wonderful job of updating and maintaining the nursery and loving those little ones! They even held their own Easter hunt on Easter Sunday.

CREEKSIDE BIBLE TIME, CHILDREN'S & JUNIOR CHURCH

Many new families joined our children's programs since kick-off Sunday. We were blessed to give out at least 10 Bibles to our kindergartners, then many more Bibles in the following months. Our classes continue to increase in size.

Creekside Friends provides 2 different hours of programming for the children on Sunday mornings and that continues to go well. The small group time occurs during the 1st hour and the kids are dismissed from the services the 2nd hour for children's and junior church. The boys and girls in grades 4-6 had a blast going on their annual hikes and trip to the Science Museum, too.

The children had opportunities to hear from a couple of First Free missionaries on both Outreach Sundays. Jan Harthan spoke on the importance of prayer, and Carolyn Dahlin talked about what being a missionary means. The children also worshipped God by singing in the worship services in the months of December and April under the leadership of Diane Ryden.

CREEKSIDE CLUBS ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

We average 80 boys and girls on Wednesday nights, and God continues to provide amazing, faithful men and women to pour out to these children. A few highlights include packing 120 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, sledding, camping at Camp Nathanael, "crazy-hair" harvest parties, and the annual Pinewood Derby! We love seeing these kids invite their friends to church for clubs!

MORE IN THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Chelsie Larson was hired as a part-time Children's Ministry Associate. She has been a huge blessing to our teachers, families, and me! She's our "welcoming" face to our nursery and preschool families on Sunday mornings, and she provides leadership in many areas.

In January, I attended the Children's Pastors Conference in Nashville. This is very encouraging to me personally, and I love the opportunity to worship with 2,000 other children's pastors, as well as hearing from experienced professionals in the field and seeing what's new in children's ministry.

I was excited to share with the women in our MOPS program what's been on my heart...and the subject of many children's ministry leaders. I desire to get the message across that parents are the number one defining factor in a child's ability to embrace God. I challenged them with a few thoughts...including to take up the "being there" challenge. I'm hoping to find opportunities to share more with parents at First Free. Please join me in praying for them...and their kids!

Respectfully Submitted and lovin' those kids,

Beth Brown
Children's Ministry Director

Parish Nurses

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor. 12:9-10. (NIV)

These verses are being fulfilled as we deal with challenges that weaken us, and yet the work thrives! Thank you for your prayers and support.

Visitation continues to be our major focus. There were seven volunteers prepared this year. Data from April 2009-March 2010 indicate that there was a monthly average of:

- 36 homebound or hospitalized people
- 18 visits made by parish nurses
- 10 visits reported by 15 trained visitors. Pastoral referrals were made as requested.

The following people have gone to be with Jesus in the past year: Dick Brown, Donald Brueske, Theo Fries, Ednah Gabler, Rod Holman, Hazel Johnson, Ellen Koland, Harriet Mikkelson, Beverly Nordell, Harry Prins, and Mildred Smith.

New ministries begun during the past year include:

- A Grief Support Program offered by a coalition of area churches, with Marilyn Fisher as our liaison.
- Home visits to new mothers by Lori Peterson. Fourteen babies have been born.
- Foot Care for Seniors, by Leah Gillette.

Other areas of ministry in the church include:

- Health related support to people in the congregation
- Collaboration with youth ministries in intergenerational social and work events
- Collaboration with children's ministries, related to behavioral issues and health needs of children
- Members of the Caring Commission assisting with projects under its auspices
- Advocating for the needs of Seniors at First Free
- Identification and communication of safety concerns in the church
- Maintenance of emergency supplies and equipment; AED and the First Aid Box
- Review and communication of nursery sanitizing procedures
- Monthly Blood Pressure Clinics directed by Christina Olson
- Yearly bloodmobile project directed by Christy Fleming

Plans for 2010-2011

As people come with desire to serve in various health-related church ministries, we offer support and encouragement. At present, several ideas are being considered including: gift baskets for people newly diagnosed with cancer, an exercise and balance program for Seniors, and an art program for people with cancer.

The Wellness Advisory Team for Parish Nursing meets quarterly. Carolyn Berg, Marilyn Fisher, Cindy Larson, John Lande, Gail Marchand, Phyllis Nordin, Christina Olson, and Johanna Holiday provide much wisdom and support.

In Christ,

Dee Huanca and Maureen Juárez
Parish Nurses

CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his **faithfulness** continues through all generations. **Psalm 100***

We at First Free can look back on another year of God's incredible **faithfulness** to us as a church. We experienced growth in nearly every area of ministry, with our Children's and Youth programs in particular seeing greater numbers again this year. We have added 24 new members to our rolls this past year as well. These numbers taken together represent an ever widening sphere of influence for First Free that reaches far into the community around us.

The membership and attendance never tell the whole story of course, for it is what people are taught and experience when in contact with a church that proves whether that church is faithful to its calling or not. I am pleased to report that our ministries and programs remain **faithful** to the Word of God. Bible-based curriculum is used throughout our children's and adult education programs; we are exhorted each Sunday with sermons that are **faithful** to the Scriptures.

Those of us who serve on the Council had a challenging and rewarding year where we clearly saw God at work. One particular area of note was the process of acquiring the property at 5155 Chicago Avenue. The opportunity presented itself to us at a time that truly seemed divinely appointed. Imagine how different this could have been the year before the mortgage crisis rather than the year following. The economics of the time certainly influenced the purchase price in a manner that served all parties well. The wisdom of previous generations at First Free came to our aid during this time as well. Our lack of debt made securing a mortgage at the best rate an easy proposition. We are planning and hoping to continue in that wise course as we finance most of the mortgage with rental income, and seek to satisfy the debt as quickly as possible.

I would be remiss if I did not note the manner in which the property was refurbished and made ready for occupancy. So many people worked together in collaboration to make the project a success. From the design to the actual construction, a spirit of unity and cooperation was clearly evident. We were able to host an open house at the end of December that was very well attended. Those who came saw the finished project which had a professional look that would not have been possible without the extraordinary cooperation behind it.

Another vital area in which we have seen significant evidence of God's **faithfulness** is in the budget submitted by the Outreach Commission. In a year when most missionaries are reporting falling support levels, those supported by First Free are in many cases seeing an increase. This was done largely through wise and careful pruning. This approach is far more difficult than simple "across the board" cuts, and we can be grateful for the diligence of Ross and the Commission in the work they have done. This is also part of a larger plan to increase the support commitment we make to those who serve on the mission field, rather than simply increasing the number of people we support.

I would like to close my report by thanking those who make it a joy to serve and minister at First Free. Firstly, my fellow Council members. We enjoy a spirit of mutual support and cooperation which has been a hallmark of the Council for years. It is truly an honor to serve with a group of such wise and Godly people.

I would also like to thank the staff for their ministry to and among us over the past year; they are all truly wonderful and used by God daily in His service. And of course I want to thank Pastor Joel; I am so grateful to have a humble, wise and Godly Pastor to serve alongside of. Joel is a man of vision and purpose and we as a church see evidence of that in his life and ministry every day. Lastly, I want to thank those who pray regularly for the leadership of First Free. Your prayers mean so much to all of us who serve in daily dependence on God who is ever **faithful**.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alan Peterson
Council Chairman

CARING COMMISSION

We have much to give thanks to the Lord about when we reflect on the last year! The Lord has fully blessed and equipped His body here with servant hearts and many who are willing to give and reach out to one another. And, I have witnessed this faith and love in action. The following is a brief summary of events and ministries included under the Caring Commission responsibilities—but not all inclusive:

Fellowship Dinners—Held in July '09 and March of this year.

Funeral Serving Committee—ALL year long... many thanks to the faithful committee members!

Thanksgiving Food Drive—1273 pounds of food was collected and brought to Community Emergency Services.

Benevolent Fund—ongoing support as needs present.

Serving Groups—new this year is help from ABF groups to serve at all church events! Praise the Lord for the willingness of ABFs to take on this task and work together. Agape did a wonderful job with the Harvest Festival and Parents of teenagers ABF and families did a fantastic job with the Easter Brunch. More opportunities are coming up, and it is a great way to get to know each other better.

New to our kitchen starting in May will be a "Log Book." Please check it out! This communication tool was designed to help keep supplies stocked and the kitchen in a "ready" condition for the next group. We have a very busy kitchen for which we are more than grateful! We hope that you find this easy to use and helpful.

Greeters and Welcome Force—many thanks to those who serve in these areas. Laura Radtke and Gen Erickson do an incredible job with helping to do schedules and John Lande is a steady, faithful resource for overseeing flow and trouble shooting needs as they arise at our services. What a wonderful team!

Quarterly Class 101 and Guest Luncheons have been well attended, and it is obvious that He is adding to our numbers!

In the next year, may His Spirit lead us to more ways that we can enter His kingdom work and live daily with His will done here at First Free.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Larson

Chair, Caring Commission

John Londborg, Gail Marchand, Dee Huanca, Maureen Jaurez, Johanna Holliday (Council Rep.)

NURTURE COMMISSION

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." II Cor. 9:8

Our church is abundantly blessed with faithful and gifted workers who, as the verse above proclaims, "abound in every good work" with our young children through youth and beyond. There are many who give of their time and gifts to teach and shepherd an ever increasing number of kids and youth each Sunday and Wednesday. We are filling up the classrooms and reaching not only church kids, but also a growing number of kids' friends who attend with them. It is with great gratitude we thank each of you who serve us and our Saviour. Again this year we had a Thanks-A-Latte luncheon on April 18 to honor those who serve and to show our appreciation.

Both Beth Brown and Mark Meyers continue to lead us with vision, purpose, creativity, and hearts that desire to see each life touched by Jesus as our youth mature from the cradle years to college and beyond. They are huge role models and lead with humility and a passion for Christ.

Last year we had 39 kids take advantage of the Camp Scholarships offered annually and as of this writing, we have 38 already requesting scholarship aide for this upcoming summer. Camp is such a wonderful time for the young people to come together in a fun environment where Christ is the focal point and they are given an opportunity to see Christ working in people's lives and how He can make a difference in their lives. Many commitments for salvation are made each year, and we have a great opportunity to be a part of life-changing moments for them.

In 2009, over 100 workers joined together for the week of Vacation Bible Camp featuring "Crocodile Dock," and this year the call is for many to help out again for "High Seas Expedition" - June 21-25.

Please continue to pray for our staff, our volunteer leaders, and all of our kids, youth, and adults as we seek to honor and glorify God, grow in our relationship with Him, and raise up our next generation to serve Him.

Respectfully submitted,

Guy Hugo
Chair, Nurture Commission

WORSHIP COMMISSION

Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim His greatness.

Let the whole world know what He has done.

Sing to Him; yes, sing His praises.

Tell everyone about His miracles.

Exult in His holy name;

O worshipers of the LORD, rejoice!

I don't know about you, but I picture verses such as these from Psalm 105 taking place **together** with other Christ-followers. Can we worship the Lord when we are alone? Of course we can – and should – but there is something significant and encouraging about worshipping alongside our brothers and sisters. One of the purposes of the worship ministry at First Free is to help us **worship together** better. We take that task seriously, and over the past several months have been looking at ways to move toward a “high commitment to excellence” (excellence in this case meaning doing our best with what God has given us). This is intended for *His* glory, because He deserves our best effort in everything we give back to Him. “*For everything comes from Him; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory. To Him be glory evermore. Amen.*” (Romans 11:35).

To assist us in this task, we had a consultant come in September to look at our current ministry and offer suggestions to help us grow. We have since made several behind-the-scenes changes in areas that we do **together**. (Do you sense the theme here?) For example, we have made changes in planning: We now have enlisted a brainstorming team to help us plan our weekly worship services. This team is made up of people with different backgrounds and gifts who **work together** to find not only music and Scripture but also other creative ways to express our worship to God. We have also made changes in our worship teams: We have moved to using three consistent teams of band, vocal, and tech volunteers who **serve together** every third week. This change is intended to help our teams grow – not just in worship leading, but also spiritually and personally through our support for one another. Consistency allows us to get to know each other better and **grow together**. All three teams, with the addition of choir members, have also begun to **meet together** quarterly, with the same intent but on a larger scale.

I've often been amazed by the description of the early church recorded in Acts 2:44-47: “*And all the believers met **together** in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshipped **together** at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*” It is not likely that we will ever achieve their level of commitment to each other, but I pray that God will bless our meager human attempts to follow their example where we can, all the while giving Him the worship He deserves, **together**.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Beckett

Chair, Worship Commission

OUTREACH COMMISSION

The Outreach Commission is charged with a broad range of responsibilities for evangelism and missions, yet probably most of the evangelism and much of the community outreach takes place without the intervention of the Commission. Children's ministries, youth ministries, women's ministries, men's ministries, and each person in the congregation carry out pre-evangelism, evangelism, and community service without any need except perhaps encouragement. The main Commission deals with our supported missionaries and organizations as well as short-term mission trips, the Outreach Weekends, and budget. The Community Outreach Committee under the direction of Commission Vice Chair Anne Schow deals with local events and opportunities.

Our twice a year Outreach Weekends are intended to encourage, inform, and engage as many persons as possible in the Great Commission, and there has been growth in all these areas. Pastor Joel and the Holy Spirit have spoken very directly to us about this with the book of James's emphasis on faith that demonstrates itself in making a difference. Our Outreach Weekends are attempts to give a message to all of us to "be not conformed to the world" (which basically says, "what's in it for me?"). In October 2009 we emphasized that prayer is key because the battle is spiritual. Our February theme was "Much Given, Much Required," increasing our awareness of the mission field in which we live with its ethnic diversity and varying needs. The theme for October 16 and 17, 2010 is "The Great Commission and YOU." Ministry Fairs have made the congregation aware of service opportunities in all areas of the church ministry and without taking anything away from the other Commissions whose responsibilities are essential, the church of Jesus Christ is a search and rescue organization and if that function is not primary, the lighthouse is forgetting its reason for existence. The Great Commission is the scope of the Outreach Commission.

A web page has been developed to post opportunities for community service and periodic testimonies of those involved and intended to motivate and inform the rest of us regarding how it can be done.

Thanks to all the Commission members and all who help with specific projects and events. Some ideas and initiatives come from many of you, the congregation. The annual NCAA Basketball Finals Event in the gym with big screen TV and fun games is an outreach to men and boys. At the other end of the spectrum, Sam Rotman, concert pianist and Messianic Jew, came April 16, 2010 for a free concert and the story of his life. The "Street Fest" during VBC week was a real draw in the neighborhood to give us visibility and good will—a cultivating event. Our presence at "Picnic in the Park" always generates a lot of interest, and the annual worship service at Minnehaha Falls draws some new people to at least check us out.

Giving to Outreach this past year fell short of the goal by about \$5,000, but we spent about \$11,000 less than the budget, mainly because there were fewer short-term mission trips than expected (Something will likely change this coming year.). Also, the congregation has responded to two special needs above and beyond the budget, \$12,000 to Urban Impact in New Orleans and over \$4,000 to Kids Alive for taking in earthquake orphans in Haiti.

We have taken a hard look at our budget because we need to use the sacrificial gifts of God's people for those ministries that fit with our own purpose within God's greater kingdom. The overall budget is going up 4.8%. Most of our supported missionaries are getting a long overdue increase. A few have been dropped. Things we cut may be worthy ministries, but we felt were not within our own scope of responsibility.

So continue to pray, be involved locally, consider going on short-term mission trips, and give generously (designating it as "Outreach/Missions.") Look on every encounter with another human being as a potential Divine Appointment with chances to "speak the truth in love."

Respectfully Submitted,

Ross S. Olson
Chair, Outreach Commission

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Women's Guild (EFCA-Resound)

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever. Psalm 118:1

Our faithful ladies have been meeting monthly, except for January, July, and August. We have enjoyed a good time of fellowship as well as learning about various missions and ministries.

We said goodbye to four of our ladies who went home to be with the Lord this past year: Hazel Johnson, Harriet Mikkelson, Bev Nordell, and Ione Seaberg.

Speakers who have shared with us were Nancy and Lon Fowler, Marie Mondy, Herb Bloomquist, Diane Chmieleuski, Pastor Joel, and Bob Solheim. Nancy, Barb, and Ardese provided music. Lee Kowalski kept us updated on missionary prayer requests and praises.

Our June picnic was at Verna Beckman's with Enrique and Becky Fernandez speaking. For Christmas, we met at Vi Fjellman's and Diane Grosz's grandchildren presented a wonderful program of music.

Christmas gifts of money were sent to our missionaries and several missions projects. Filled shoe boxes of clothes, etc. were brought to the Marie Sandvik Mission. God has been good to provide, and thanks to our ladies for giving.

Love in Christ,

Janice Nielsen and the Board

Women's Neighborhood Bible Study

If you dropped by church on a Wednesday morning, you would find women of all ages gathered around tables of 8 to participate in Women's Neighborhood Bible Study (WNBS). During the 2009/2010 school year, 55 women attended our Bible study. We come together each week to study God's Word, enjoy fellowship, and pray for one another. We are so grateful for our excellent childcare workers who make it possible for many young mothers to participate in WNBS.

This year we completed a study entitled, Moses - Learning to Lead, and we are currently studying the book of Matthew together. One of the more unique characteristics of this group is that it is interdenominational. Approximately half of the women who attend WNBS (including several on the leadership team) do not call First Free their home church. The only requirement to participate in WNBS is that you believe that the Bible is worth studying...and we trust God to do the rest!

Patty Mellema

Special Events/Groups

The Ladies' Tea is a wonderful opportunity for all women of the church to meet and greet one another and to spend time together. The Christmas Tea was our first tea, and it was a grand success. Fifty-six women reminisced about Christmases past, enjoyed tea or hot chocolate, ate scones and fruit, sang Christmas carols, and got to know each other better. An additional Spring Tea was held on May 1st (May Day) with the theme of Flowers and Fellowship.

The Ladies' Book Club began meeting this past fall with a dozen ladies committed to reading one book a month in a variety of genres. We met on the 3rd Monday of each month from 6:30-8 PM. Within that 1 ½ hours, we have experienced lively discussion and usually much laughter. If you like to read, consider joining our book club next fall.

Pam Kriesel-Koll

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

MOPS this year has been all about relationships. It was our goal to help our moms begin, build, and maintain relationships. To reach this goal we have had fellowship time with each other, relationship building exercises, and speakers. Some of our speakers have talked about topics such as: children's spirituality, nutrition, and even in-law relationships. We have also heard from our very own mentor moms, Karin Olson and Donna Holliday.

A new addition to our steering team this year was a Service Leader. This position has done things like coordinating our efforts with Operation Christmas Child, and at one of our last meetings, through donations from our moms, we put together midwife kits for moms in developing countries.

We have approximately 35 moms attending this year and 65 children in our Moppets program, which is completely staffed with volunteers. We have had 2 new families begin attending First Free from MOPS this year. We met on Fridays only this year, but will revisit the Thursday group as we have just begun to recruit leadership for next year.

Becki Kobielush

FINANCE & PROPERTY BOARD

In the past to keep within the church budget, we chose repairing and maintaining what we have and tabled large capital improvements for future consideration. Some of those large capital improvements are now in desperate need of action. This year we are taking steps to that end.

We had been contemplating several areas of the sidewalks for repair. In the fall of 2009 the city found our sidewalks not up to standard. We were charged to make the repairs and then some. A city approved contractor replaced about 75% of our property's sidewalks. We also had the section of sidewalk going to the north door and some of the walk around the 5151 house renewed due to deterioration. It was a big expense, but for safety reasons, as well as being city mandated, it needed to be done.

The landscape committee, formed last year to assist the board in matters concerning landscaping of church property, has made many significant improvements to the beautification of our exterior spaces. Cheryl Morel and her many volunteers have a strong commitment to using landscaping as a church ministry and possess knowledge of plant life and landscape design. We thank them for their continuing devotion to that call. They recently held a Saturday work day devoted to an outdoor spring cleaning.

This past year a much needed replacement of the closet doors in the gym was accomplished by Gene Baum. We appreciate his service in time, expertise, and sweat. The old doors were not well suited for a gym environment; they were continually being knocked off their tracks from ball strikes and bouts of youthful athleticism.

Storage spaces in the church building are becoming a premium. Many areas of the building have been inundated with un-stored items and complaints about "clutter" have been made. We have been working to get unused items removed or stored away as well as designing new areas for storage. The old lockers in the shower room adjacent to the north-end basement bathrooms have been removed and storage shelving has been installed in their place.

We recently approved the installation of a booster water heater for the dishwasher. Our Facilities Technician also found that there was an element in the dishwasher tank corroded to such an extent that it was keeping the dishwasher from heating up to its proper temperature. With that repair and a booster water heater, the dishwasher is now almost as good as new and much more user friendly. The current large water heater has been turned down and maintained at a lower temperature for a cost savings. It supplies the new booster water heater which brings the water for the dishwasher and two kitchen sinks up to the required 180 degrees plus for sanitizing.

The flat roof section of the church has for many years been in constant need of repair to alleviate water leaks. The existing roof is covered with a rubber membrane about 20-25 years old which was laid over the original 1964 tar and gravel roof. The membrane has surpassed its design life. We are presently gathering bids and recommendations for a roof replacement (tear-off and rebuild). We have contacted eight roofing companies and are now in the process of making final decisions about the roof type and contractor. Our plan is to have the project completed before September.

Part of the roof project is the removal of the chimney which serves a rarely, if ever used fireplace in a basement classroom. Estimates for a repair of the chimney, as we wanted to be done with the project before the roof installation, revealed that it was actually in need of a total replacement, which is far too costly. The decision was made to simply remove it (keeping the fireplace intact) and roof over it. Our insurance premiums will be reduced has a working fireplace is a safety item. This will also allow for more space in the church office. The large column adjacent to counter which encloses the chimney flue can be removed, the counter extended, and more cabinet space added beneath.

The Finance and Property Board asks for your continued prayers and support.

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 (New American Standard Bible)

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Sawyer

F & P Board Member

TREASURER

Stewardship of God's gifts is present at First Evangelical Free Church. Despite a weak economy over the past year that has affected the overall tithes and offerings, ministries of the church have thrived and are looking forward to growth in 2010-2011. God's grace has allowed us to help others affected by natural disasters through special offerings.

This past year presented an opportunity that couldn't be passed up. That was the purchase of the house at 5155 Chicago. Initially the house is being rented, which offsets the debt service. In God's time a plan will develop on how to incorporate this purchase into the ministry of the church. The purchase was an unbudgeted expense of \$30,850 that was voted on and approved by the congregation. The debt service to the home will be \$14,400 per year.

The staff has been vigilant to keep within the budget that was approved last year. As you see in the other reports from staff, many wonderful, life-enriching experiences are taking place in various ministries, especially with the youth of the church. They are the future.

Income for Local Ministries was short \$36,209 from budget and disbursements were over budget by \$10,007. Had the purchase of the home not occurred, disbursements would have been under budget \$20,843.

Income for Outreach was short \$5,130 from budget, but disbursements were \$11,678 under budget.

The proposed budget for 2010-2011 is a 10.9% increase for Local Ministries. Outreach is proposing a 4.8% increase. The combined increase is 9.7%. There was much thought and deliberation by the staff, commissions, and board members in the proposed budget.

Commencing this summer, the roof on the education and office part of the church building needs to be replaced. This is only one phase of a more comprehensive plan to upgrade the facility. Plans are in development on how best to finance these necessary improvements and repairs.

Respectfully,

David Kriesel-Koll
Treasurer

PROPOSED BUDGET

(Please contact the church office for a copy of the proposed budget)