



Whatever happened to our Adult Sunday School classes?

Why are our adult classes called Adult Bible Fellowships (ABF's)?

These are two questions I have been asked on several occasions. I thought as we focus this edition of **First Word** on our purpose of "Maturity", I would take a moment to explain what Adult Bible Fellowships (ABF's) are all about.

We believe our ABF's that meet on Sunday mornings are foundational ministries to adults here at First Evangelical Free Church. Adult Bible Fellowships are "mini-churches" or "mini-congregations" within the larger congregation. Each ABF is a mix of ages, which is organized by peer group or similar "life" situations.

Every ABF has a number of goals. First, they are the place for adults to **connect** to the body. The celebration of our worship service does not allow people to become known or to get to know others. The ABF's do.

In fact, as guests come to our worship service, it is the ABF's that make the follow up contact with them the following week and invite them back to church. It is through the ABF's that fellowship, socials, and the care of the body take place. Becoming connected into the body here at First Free goes way beyond just becoming a member. It means being part of a mini-congregation, an Adult Bible Fellowship.

Second, ABF's are a place to develop **mature disciples** of Jesus Christ. In each of our ABF's, the study of God's Word is essential. Typically the majority of the time each week is spent in study of scripture and prayer. Each ABF has the freedom to decide what they want to study and who their teachers are going to be. We do look for spiritual growth as the supernatural impact of how God's Word changes lives.

A third goal is for each of the Adult Bible Fellowships to **practice our 5 purposes**. Each ABF can do "Evangelism", "Fellowship", "Teaching", "Equipping" and "Worship".

Joel Sutton
Senior Pastor
joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org

Eric Twietmeyer
Worship & Student Ministry
eric@firstfreechurch.org

Bob Chapman
Visitation Pastor
bobandlois@EFCM.net

Russ Anteronen
Liaison to the Community
russ-mail2@juno.com

Cindy Sawyer
Office Administrator
cindy.sawyer@firstfreechurch.org

Stacy Olson
Administrative Assistant
stacy.olson@firstfreechurch.org

Barb Olson
Organist

Deborah Smith
pianist
deborah.smith@nteralia.com

Scott Beckett
Custodian
scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org



SERMON SERIES *Pastor Joel Sutton*

New Sermon Series: Families Under Pressure

- May 2 – Families Under Pressure: The Pressure of Divorce
- May 9 – Families Under Pressure: The Pressure of Motherhood
- May 16– Families Under Pressure: The Pressure of Fatherhood

- May 23 - Service at Its Best – I Peter 4:10
- May 30 - God's Answer for the Tired Minister! - 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE PURPOSE STATEMENT



WE EXIST TO:

BRING PEOPLE INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

CONNECT THEM TO GOD'S FAMILY,

MATURE THEM IN THEIR FAITH,

EQUIP THEM FOR MINISTRY SO THAT GOD'S NAME WILL BE EXALTED.

Nurture In Full Circle

Darlene Gunkle

You are not alone if you have had shattered dreams. I dreamt of being married to my one and only, free to grow together in the relationship. I dreamt of raising children together, but my hopes and dreams of having everything I wanted wasn't meant to be for me and my sons. I needed help to save a crumbling marriage. Instead our marriage irrevocably fell apart.

Pray

1. Pray that ABF's would continue to be a source of help for struggling families.
2. Pray that we would commit to finding God-centered ways of nurturing each other so we can fulfill our 3rd purpose: to mature.
3. As we mature, pray that we will keep focused on our need for Christ first.



"I used to be so scared of small groups. I have begun to see a change, and have been allowing people to pray for me."

James 5:16

After my divorce I began searching for a church where I could feel connected without being judged. A year ago this past November, Kevin and I found out about First Free from a close family friend. I was skeptical and cautious, entangled with regrets regarding a destructive path I had taken in life, but I thought I would go once-just one Sunday that's it. At the lowest point in my life, I made myself enter the doors of First Free. Immediately I sensed authentic kindness among so many people in this church body.

I never felt judged as a divorced, single mom from the people we have gotten to know. I was free to share my story and to really be myself. The result of meeting so many wonderful people allowed me to expose hurts I hid for over two decades. What a release it is to have people to share and pray with.

Growth occurs in communities of accountability centered on Christ!

God altered many negative aspects of my life, transforming them into positive things. These gifts of encouragement tuned me more intimately toward people going through similar struggles. God bless you all for what you have done for Kevin and my friends. To our prayer warriors, thank you for all the prayers that were said over me and my two sons Nathan, Kevin.



"The Christ-like love, kindness and genuine caring shown to us in this church body will never be forgotten."

Darlene

Plug In With A B F-(Our Support Fellowships)

- Young Adults _____ Post high school to 25 (Upstairs Loft)
- Chaim _____ 20's and 30's (Room 1)
- Sojourners _____ 30's and 40's (Room 6)
- Agape _____ 46-60 (Room 3)
- Fidelis Maranatha _____ Seniors (Room 2)
- Seekers Intl. & Professionals (Room 4 & Pastor's study)
- Prayer Team _____ (Church library-all ages)



Personal and Corporate Nurture

Marilyn Fisher



No one is too young to be a part of our church ministry. Our Nursery welcomes babies and toddlers where Sarah Clinton and her staff of volunteers lovingly care for the little ones. Now there is a need for increased staff support since our nursery is growing quickly! If you are interested in giving up some time to the babies and toddlers in the nursery, contact Sarah Clinton at (952) 431-5342.



We are excited about our Sunday school classes and Children's church for kids from preschool to grade 6. These classes are growing exponentially.



Many of our church families have hosted overseas students and brought them to church. Soon it was evident we needed a class for those who knew little about God, the Bible, or the Christian faith. Dee and David Huanca, and others started Seeker's class to teach the students and provide fellowship. Others joined in leadership, and we added another class since many people became Christians and outgrew the beginning Class. Each Sunday, Seekers continues its fellowship into the afternoon with a potluck. They love when members of other ABF's join them. Why not stop by and get acquainted?



We added new Adult Bible Fellowships. The Young Adults' Class is now taught by Wayne and Julie Danielson (who finally graduated from the high school group). Chaim for the 20 & 30 year olds and Sojourners for the 30 & 40 year old group provide a place for fellowship and learning to apply God's word to daily life.



The Agape, Fidelis, and Maranatha classes have been going strong for many years and are now dealing with empty nests, grandkids and retirement. In this fast-paced world, so many pressures, struggles, and heartaches exist. Belonging to an ABF means one does not have to journey alone.



"I hope to be like Caleb whose enthusiasm didn't diminish with age. I urge anyone to consider how God can use your gifts to nurture the next generation."

Marilyn Fisher

The Purpose Driven Life, by Rick Warren uses the acronym SHAPE to stand for Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences. One is urged to find a way to serve that matches his or her Shape and for me that is in the Nurture ministry of our church.

Over the years I have had the privilege of taking part in most of the ministries that the Nurture Commission oversees. God has given me a heart for children and for learning. I spent 30 years as a public school teacher before retiring. Teaching keeps you young at heart, and passing on my faith in the Savior to the next generation is worth the effort.

Perhaps my favorite ministry is Vacation Bible School. We open our church to the community, welcoming children to an exciting week full of teaching God's word and demonstrating His love. A great mix of children from our church, the neighborhood and other parts of the city attend our VBS, and we have had volunteers from teens to those in their 80's and up. There is so much we learn from each other. I love when our whole church family works together.

❖ FEFC NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS ❖

Friendship Evangelism Training



Sat May 22, 9:00 am–3:30 pm

Emmanuel Christian Center

7777 University Ave NE, Minneapolis

Pastor Joel wants to take a group from First Free Church to this awesome time of equipping. God can make a huge difference in the lives of your friends. How will you effectively reach them? Find out! You won't want to miss this opportunity. We will attend as a group, so if you want to go, contact the church office at (612) 827-4705. Check out twincitiesfestival.org.

An all church ladies spring luncheon on Sat. May 15th at 12:30 pm features speaker, Betty Swanson. Betty will discuss "Tending The Garden of Your Soul." This event includes singer Jan Elasky Barrett. Tickets are available for \$8.00 on Sundays, May 2nd and May 9th.



BOOMING BOYS!

- Liam Beckett was born on 4/26 at 8:53 am weighing 7lbs and 7oz to Scott and Vanessa Beckett!
- Ethan Hebert was born on 4/24 in the morning to Theresa and Dan Hebert. Check their website at heberthome.netfirm.com!

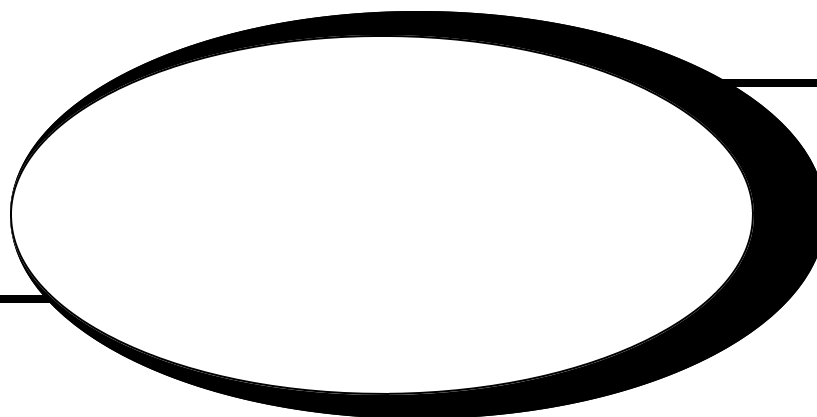
The 2nd Annual Vacation Bible School Painting Day

May 8th / 9:30 am- 4:00 pm



Whether you are a budding Picasso or strictly paint-by-number, we have a job for you! We will be painting scenes, sets, and decorations for VBS on May 8th. Come for an hour or stay for the whole day. Lunch will be provided. Questions? Contact Patty Mellema.

First Evangelical Free Church
Minneapolis, MN 55417



TO BRING
TO CONNECT
TO MATURE
TO EQUIP
TO EXALT