



FIRST WORD

First Evangelical Free Church Monthly Publication

AUGUST 2004

THE WHOLE
VISION

—CENTER CONNECT CULTIVATE CONTRIBUTE—

Each week over 110 million people go to church somewhere in America. Does that surprise you?

That means more people will go to church this weekend (even in the summer) than will go to all the NFL games combined this fall, even more than major league baseball games this summer. And more than all the NBA and NHL sporting events combined this upcoming season.

This is great news isn't it? Maybe. The problem is that for many of those people they have no idea why they attend church. Some go out of tradition. Some go out of guilt. Some go out of habit.

In this issue of First Word, I want to remind us why we do church. I can sum it all up with 5 reasons:

- 1) **To help you center your life around God through worship.** Jesus said in Matthew 22:37 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all of your soul and with all of your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." The greatest thing you can do with your life is to know and love God. Worship is the simple act of building your life around Him. God did not put us on earth to live a self-centered life, but rather a God-centered life.
- 2) **To help you connect with other believers in fellowship.** The first thing God wants us to do is to connect with Him. He then wants you to connect with other believers and learn to love them. 1 Peter tells us this "God has given us the privilege of being born again so that we are now members of God's very own family." God wants you in his family. Just like a parent, he wants you to learn to love other people in His family. That is fellowship.
- 3) **To help you cultivate spiritual maturity through discipleship.** God wants each of us, who are born into His family, to grow up. How? By knowing His word. By trusting His wisdom. By obeying His commands. By developing His character. God gets concerned when He sees a person who has been a believer for 5 years and that person has not grown. At First Free your growth is our goal.
- 4) **To help you contribute something back through ministry.** Ministry is not something pastors do. Ministry is what every Christ-follower is called to do. It means using your gifts and abilities to help other people in love. 1 Peter 4 says, "God has given each of you some special abilities. Be sure to use them to help each other."
- 5) **To help you communicate God's love through evangelism.** That means passing on the good news to someone else. What is the good news? Here is the good news: 1. You are not an accident. 2. You were made to last forever. 3. God has a purpose for your life. 4. No matter what you have done, Jesus Christ will forgive you because He has paid for it on the cross. 5. You can have a relationship with God. That is good news and everybody needs to hear it.

So this next school year come to church on Sunday mornings growing in each of these 5 purposes!

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SERMON SERIES *Pastor Joel Sutton*

Acts Continued...

- August 1 - Acts 6-7, Standing Tall
- August 8 - Acts 8:4-40, Phillip: Taking it on the Road
- August 15 - Acts 9:1-31, Saul: Blinded by Love
- August 22 - Acts 9:32-11:18, Peter, Peter, Reptile Eater
- August 29 - Acts 11: 19-30, What Is A Christian?

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.

FEFC VISION



In a game of baseball, it is all about timing—timing of a hit, timing of where to look, and timing with your teammates' maneuvers. I keep wandering back to this idea of timing. As I watched my nephew practice out in the baseball field, I was reminded of how the dynamics of this game ties so closely with our vision. No, not baseball per se, but of how each of our goals connect, much like how each base marks a progression for the players on the field. To them each phase is one step closer to making it home with a higher score. For us at FEFC, it is one step closer to exalting God. Take a look at some of the “bases” which are the future goals—phases that we can clearly see. Each goal moves us one step closer in making God unavoidable in our community and life.

THE BASE - SICS

EXALT

Home plate: Giving God the ultimate due credit is what it is all about. This ultimate goal is why we train and work so hard and yes, play hard.

BRING

First base...How do we get there without vision? How do we reach out personally to share Christ? This is where the Evangelism Task Force comes in. They are the ones to hand out the bats—providing the church body with tools, ways of training, and education so that we can effectively share Christ making Him known. The difference is...the relationship.

Goals that will help us slide safely into first base involve several things. We are working towards teaching a 401 class this fall. We also are encouraging about 50 % of our church to participate in Luis Palau's Twin Cities Festival on August 7-8. The Ten Keys Course is still impacting our church in a gigantic way as we see it being shared with the Seekers. We want to hold another 10 Keys for Unlocking the Bible Course with the faith goal of 50 participants and 50% of them invited guests.

CONNECT

When I used to go to the base ball games with my Dad, I remember the players signaling to each other. It was rather entertaining. The truth is that a connected team communicates what needs to happen for a goal to be reached. Connecting takes that extra effort and time of sharing and being open. Connection is needed for the vision of Parish Nursing. We want to join with this vital part of our body—the elderly. We want to communicate what Parish Nursing is and its purpose. The goal is to see this ministry up and running by January 2005.

MATURE

No game is played without effort and strain. I'm sure that once it gets around the 9th inning, the players want to rest! However, when one pushes a tiny bit past the strain they actually build up their endurance level. Maturity. Can you see the connection? Strength is what we want for FEFC. We want to see a more definable ministry of corporate prayer. In our 2004-2005 schedule there are 5 concerts of prayer to be held in September, November, January, March and May. Alicia, our intern, and the youth band had a great opportunity to lead the concert of prayer. We want to see more people step up to lead besides Pastor Joel—even different people from the ABF's! Ever wonder about our prayer team way back when? We desire to see expansion in the next coming year with our current prayer team.

EQUIP

Imagine your whole team skipping warm up before a World Series! You would see injuries left and right. Without equipping our body, we run a higher risk of injury! One of the things we are doing to “warm up” and prepare for further ministry is to develop a long-range plan concerning the houses that the church owns. The preparation includes putting together a subcommittee that will investigate possibilities to regarding future ministry goals for the houses.



Major League

Look closely at this picture, and you may see someone you recognize! Ever wonder about our prayer team's history? As it states in the first section of the newsletter, one of our goals is to place a higher priority on prayer as a church body. The picture below shows what the prayer team was like around 1984. Currently our prayer team is about half that size. It is staggering to think of how many people were involved and attending FEFC back then. The ratio shows a steep imbalance. Prayer is really the backbone—the support system on which our church depends in order to stay strong. That communication with God allows us to continue to follow exactly what He has in mind for His growing vision for our church.

MID WEEK BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER



“Prayer teaches me the value of trust in ALL things. Strength and peace comes from God. On my own, I worry too often.”

Nadine Mayo, a member of First Free, yearns to see prayer in our church increase exponentially. She accepted a special position as prayer coordinator.

“I felt the Holy Spirit calling me to serve in this area. Though it has been very difficult being a full-time working mom and dealing with physical challenges that both Jim and I suffer from, I still wanted to minister to my church body while I am at home.” Nadine sees the vision statements impact on the direction of the Sojourners class (a group geared towards people in their 30's and 40's). Nadine encounters the impact especially in the area of **EQUIP**. God Keeps using unique ways to help Sojourners prepare to reach out. Nadine is making that connection of how crucial it is that prayer and equipping go hand-in-hand.

Little League



Equipping our congregation is an honor. I have seen this happen during The 10 Keys to Unlocking the Bible Course. I look at what is happening in VBS, and see that the kids are being given tools to know and love Christ better. I saw the staff of VBS work so hard and prepare, so they could demonstrate God's love to these kids. How does the younger generation of our church fit into God's vision for FEFC? How do they view the five elements in our vision statement? How would a college-age student tell a Jr. High student the importance of God's plan and vision for FEFC? That's when I had a chance to share with Christina Olson my thoughts. This is what she had to say.

“When I was in Jr. Church (way way back), I was taught that the reason I was in church was to worship God, to worship with other believers in fellowship, and to be encouraged and to be strengthened in my faith with them. So, if I were to explain the church's vision statement to somebody in Jr.

Church, I would stress the importance of having a strong personal relationship with Christ and reaching others for Him.”

Christina Olson

❖ FEFC NEWS & UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS ❖



THANK YOU
VBS VOLUNTEERS!

Thanks you to all who participated in VBS. We had a dynamic kickoff. The kids had a blast. Continue to pray that the stories they encountered and the lessons they were taught would have significant impact on their lives.

SENIOR SINGLES— update

The Overcomers has changed their name to Senior Singles due to a higher number of people attending class who've never been married. We want to encourage anyone who is single in this part of their life to join us, and it is our desire to be inclusive. We'll meet on August 8th and September 12th at 12:30 pm at the Olive Garden. - Char Boyles



August 7-8

Outdoor Twin Cities festival at the capital!

Keep your calendars open for this awesome time of worship and fun. Bring your family and some friends along. If you have not picked up materials for this event, there is plenty still in the foyer. The event will run from 12:00 pm to 10 pm. Check www.twincitiesfestival.org for featured artists.



We need you in our church family album! In order for that to happen, you can sign up for when you are available to get your photo taken for the upcoming pictorial directory for 2004-2005. Appointment sign up dates fall on Aug 1, 8, 15th, and the 22nd. Don't miss out!. For further updates, check the bulletin each week. Also check the posters around the church too!

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Bring Connect Mature

Equip Exalt
