

Attention Christmas Shoppers: Conspiracy Planned

It's only October, yes, but we are all keenly aware of the Christmas shopping season on the horizon. While merchants and department stores and marketers are counting on you to contribute to their sales during the Christmas season (in which, by the way, last year Americans spent more than 450 million dollars on presents, we want to challenge you early on to consider spending your Christmas season differently: spending time with people, worshiping Christ, giving to causes that will bring about Jesus' Kingdom.

It's called the Advent Conspiracy.

It means giving children one or two gifts, instead of 20.

It means practicing "presence" with others, not just presents.

It means focusing on the Gift, not the wrapping paper.

It means as a church we will join together to give to those in need.

Stay tuned for more about the Advent Conspiracy starting November 30th.



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Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first-in-ten-years blood drive at the church. It was a successful blood drive with 33 participants from our church, many of you being first time blood donors. Thank you! 24 units of blood were donated, which can benefit up to 62 patients in our community. Thank you for helping to give the gift of life through our church. We were also able to be a good witness to the Memorial Blood Center staff and we hope you will participate in future blood drives.

- Kristy Fleming

p.s. One of our members received blood in the week following the blood drive!

Firstword

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Something You Don't Need to Pray About

Mark Batterson shares this insight in his book *Wild Goose Chase*. "Several years ago I was a part of a small group with a friend who was working with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Georgetown University. As we shared prayer requests at the end of one of our meetings, my friend said their ministry needed a computer, and I said I'd pray for him. I started praying that God would provide a computer, and then I felt as if God interrupted me. It's hard to describe the tone I heard from God. It was stern but not unkind. It was as if the Holy Spirit whispered these words in my spirit: Why are you asking Me? You're the one with the extra computer!

"So I quit praying midsentence and decided to do something about it. I told my friend I had a computer that I wanted to give him. And I became the answer to my own prayer. Why ask God to do something for us when it is within our power to do something about it ourselves?"

There are some things you don't need to pray about. Doing ministry is one of those things. So let me give you 3 basic truths that the Bible teaches us about ministry.

1) I've been created for ministry. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." We were created in Christ Jesus to do good works. You were created for ministry.

2) I have been called into ministry. I am not who I think I am. I am not who you think I am. I really am who God says I am. And God says your primary identification is not that you are a man or woman, not that you are a husband or a son or a daughter or a mother or a wife. God says your primary identity is that you are a minister of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Did you see it? You have been chosen by God himself. You are priests of the king. God has called you. When you became a Christ-follower, you became a minister.

3) I have been commanded to minister. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. (Matthew 20:26-27).

Jesus was talking about an attitude and an action. Servanthood is not an option. A non-ministering Christian is not obeying God. God expects us to be like Christ.

Later in this month of October, one of the special events of our "40 Days of Community" will be our Ministry Fair. On consecutive Sundays, October 19th and October 26th, our church ministries will be showcasing their particular ministry. You can learn what skills are involved, the times required, and decide if you fit. Our prayer is that if you have not yet found your area in which to serve, or you have been hesitant about offering your time somewhere, this ministry fair will be just the thing you need to get involved.

- Pastor Joel

Fall Worship Schedule

October 5 - Connecting With the Family

October 12 - Maturing Together

October 19 - Serving Together

October 26 - Exalting Christ Together

November 2 - Celebration Sunday

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
 is **EXALTED**

VISITORS EXTEND OUR COMMUNITY

Imagine not being able to attend our worship services and activities after a lifetime of being a part of our congregation. For those who have experienced this, visitors are literally a life line to our church. It's so good to hear ways in which they have become a part of the lives of those who are home bound or in nursing homes. Although some have lost part of their cognitive abilities, they are always responsive to hearing scripture and prayer. When prayer is suggested they assume a posture of prayer with hands folded and head bowed. Many times when invited they pray as well. The following are examples of what some of the current visitors are doing:

Carolyn Berg and Jerry Olson meet at Redeemer Residence. The residents there are so responsive to their visits. Since Carolyn uses a wheelchair, those with physical disabilities may have an easier time relating to her. Seeing Jerry and Carolyn work together is evidence of Christ's love in action.

Marilyn Fisher has a special understanding of grief because of her own experience with the deaths of her husband and grandson as well as her work in hospice care. She is able to gently guide those she visits to resources to help through grief regarding any losses.

The bilingual abilities of Felix Juarez are greatly appreciated by those who speak Spanish. However, his visits are not limited to Spanish-speaking. He often accompanies his wife Maureen on her visits as a parish nurse.

Mary and John Londborg have regularly had a Bible Study with a couple in their home. Occasionally, Mary has played her violin on some visits to others.

Unni Symington meets monthly for lunch with one of the women who is unable to attend church.

Others from Adult Bible Fellowships (ABFs) visit those within their group. Many of you are gifted in this type of ministry. Please contact Dee Huanca or Maureen Juarez or sign up at the Ministry Fair to start your visitation ministry. You can make a difference!

- Dee Huanca, Parish Nurse

Meet Olivia Lueth



Many of you have been praying for our search for our new Office Administrator. God has answered your prayers.

I want to introduce to you, Olivia Lueth, our new Office Administrator. Olivia is a 2008 graduate of Bethel University. She has a double major in both English Literature and Writing and Biblical and Theological Studies. Olivia has worked as an Editor for the Bethel University literary magazine and as a copy editor for the school newspaper. She has also been an intern with Bethany House publishers and worked as a student manager on Bethel's campus. Currently she worships at Hope Community church downtown in Minneapolis.

Olivia will bring her skills in writing, editing, and administration to our church office as well as her love of people. She will start in the office on Monday, October 13th. So please, feel free to introduce yourself and say "hello". We are excited to have her join our team.

"Thank You" to the Carpet Layers!

Have you read the last chapter of Romans lately? The whole chapter seems to be one long thank you note. Paul thanks Priscilla and Aquilla for risking their lives for him. He thanks a woman named Mary for her hard work. He recognizes two relatives, Andronicus and Junias for their outstanding work among the apostles. Paul's thank you list goes on and on it seems.

Why does Paul write these personal notes? Because he knows how important it is for the body of Christ, the church, to serve one another. Earlier in Romans 12 Paul says, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body . . . We have different gifts . . . if it is serving, let him serve, if it is teaching, let him teach, if it is encouraging, let him encourage . . ." (Romans 12:4-8). Paul wanted to recognize those who were using their gifts to help his ministry and the ministry of the church.

This past August on two consecutive weekends, multiple teams of people showed up here at First Free to lay down our much needed new carpet, downstairs in the south wing. And so, like Paul, I want to express my appreciation and the appreciation of the church to a long list of those who used their physical skills and talents to serve the body of Christ.

Scott Beckett, Doug Brown, Adam Caruso, Wayne Danielson, Bob (Hong) Gu, Nick (Lei) Guo, Andrew Holiday, James Holiday, David Kriesel-Koll, Pam Kriesel-Koll, Cindy Larson, Keith Larson, Jeff Miller, Jim Nelson, Dave Nyholm, Gerald Olson, Tim Quinn, Evan (Chang) Zheng; Sam Song, Gene Xiao.

Paul's letter to the church at Philippi summarizes my thoughts: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy." - Pastor Joel

SERVING the WHOLE FAMILY by SERVING THE LITTLEST - by Beth Brown

You can't walk far in church without running into a newborn baby! We've welcomed at least 4 new babies since the middle of the summer and we look forward to welcoming over half a dozen more in the next few months! We already have 39 little ones who could potentially fill the "Cuddlebugs", "Crawlers", and "Climbers" rooms on Sunday mornings. Because of this growth we have 3 hard-working nursery coordinators that we'd love for you to meet!



Mary Bostrom is starting her fourth year of being a nursery coordinator at First Free. She and her husband, Dale, along with their 3 boys, Andrew, Daniel, and Joshua, have been attending this church for 5 years. As coordinator, Mary loves all the hugs and cute things the children say. She sees the nursery as a safe place parents can leave their kids!

Katie Goodman has been attending First Free since she was a preschooler! Her husband is Jordan and they have 1 year-old Natalie. As a "new"

coordinator, Katie loves the opportunity to help provide a good and safe environment for the children and gets excited about bringing in new toys for all these kids! This is a great place to get to know all the volunteers and meet parents of other children her own daughter's age.

Becki Kobielush is married to Jeremy and they have a 1 year-old daughter, Lucy. They've been attending First Free for over a year. Becki enjoys getting to know all the children as well as their parents! She loves welcoming the little ones by name and learning which toys they like best. Becki's mother-in-law even painted a beautiful mural in the new 2's room!

Mary, Katie, and Becki all agree that they serve in a ministry that is hugely important to young families. Many families visit First Free and their experience with the nursery is vital in their decision to come back on another Sunday.

During these 40 Days of Community, don't forget the infants, 1 and 2 year-olds that also make up our community. There is a ministry here with opportunities to serve. Thank you to Mary, Katie, and Becki for their vision for our young families and for their hearts to reach these little ones and their moms and dads for Jesus!