

Faith Story

- Vi Fjellman

I am eternally grateful for growing up in a godly home. When I was 5, a neighbor invited our family to visit First Free at the old 12th Avenue location. Everyone came to know my folks, George and Victoria Johnson. They loved the Lord and were very faithful to First Free. It was there that I met and married Paul Fjellman. We were married for almost 58 years when he passed away 10 years ago. We had 4 children, the oldest of which, Dick, also went home to be with the Lord 5 years ago. Other than living out-of-state for a few years, First Free has been my home for 83 years.



I have "survived" breast cancer twice in my life. I was first diagnosed with breast cancer 58 years ago. Treatment was different back then. I had a radical mastectomy followed by "Deep X-ray". Deep X-ray was done at a private residence, not a hospital. This was before chemotherapy, radiation, or even cobalt treatments. Against the advice of my doctors I took the treatment. The Lord had more plans for me, which were the pregnancies and births of our two daughters.

I was so thankful and all seemed to be going well, but the breast cancer returned some years later. The treatment this time was another mastectomy followed by radiation.

In honor of my battle with breast cancer, my granddaughter, Lori Ann, ran in the "Race for the Cure" on Mother's Day. This picture was taken at the "Race for the Cure" dinner that my granddaughter and daughters attended the night before the race.

God is so good "He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own."

*First Free Church
5150 Chicago Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55417*



Firstword

First Evangelical Free Church A Church Family Publication December 2008

What Ever Happened to Christmas?

What ever happened to Christmas? Remember . . . that time when we celebrate the birth of a Savior who came to turn empires upside down with a revolutionary love that continues to change our world this very minute?

Today, most Americans celebrate Christmas by suffocating in a pile of to-do lists and by giving presents that have little or no meaning. We spend an average of \$450 billion a year on Christmas. And when you do that math; that is about \$900 per family. Most of which gets returned or thrown away anyway. Most of which is put on the credit card to be paid off in the next year.

Is that what God had in mind when He sent his Son? Is that the Christmas you have always dreamed of?

This year we are challenging our church to take Christmas back through our series, "The Advent Conspiracy". We want to celebrate Christmas the way it was intended: with Jesus. For Jesus.

How do we do that?

By Worshipping Him fully. By Spending less. By relationally Giving more. By Loving all. The way Jesus loved.

Check out this issue of First Word and what Advent Conspiracy means for us at First Free. Are you ready for an Advent season of awesome worship that honors Christ and brings you closer to the ones you love the most while changing lives in the process? This Christmas season, we invite you to enter into the story.

- Pastor Joel

ADVENT CONSPIRACY

- November 30 – Advent Conspiracy 1 – The True Wonder of Christmas – Luke 2:8-20

Jesus' birth is a true wonder. As people experience the wide-eyed amazement of His arrival, they will resist the consumerist impulses of our culture and align themselves with Christ.

- December 7 - Advent Conspiracy 2 – Which King will you Choose? – Matthew 2:1-18

There is a contrast of kingdoms in the Christmas story. Which king and kingdom will you say "yes" to?

- December 14 - Advent Conspiracy 3 – Real or Plastic? – John 1:1-4; John 11

Every Christmas we are offered a lot of versions of a plastic Jesus. But in the Advent, Jesus offers us a real relationship with a real Jesus.

- December 21 - Advent Conspiracy 4 – Christmas of Another Kind – Philippians 2:6-11

Christ, though He was rich, became poor to make many rich. It was in the Advent that Jesus entered our poverty so we would no longer be poor.

- December 24 – Christmas Eve – God's view of Christmas

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

Advent Conspiracy



[Worship Fully]

It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of Advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

[Spend Less]

Before you think we're getting all Scrooge on you, let us explain what we mean. We like gifts. Our kids really like gifts. But consider this: How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation? How many times have you received a gift out of that same obligation? Thanks, but no thanks, right? We're asking people to consider buying ONE LESS GIFT this Christmas. Just one. Sounds insignificant, yet many who have taken this small sacrifice have experienced something nothing less than a miracle: They have been more available to celebrate Christ during the Advent season.

GIVE PRESENCE

[Relationally Give More]

God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. So it's no wonder that we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends and family in the most memorable ways possible. Time is the real gift Christmas offers us, and no matter how hard we look, it can't be found at the mall. Time to make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. Time to write Mom a letter. Time to take the kids sledding. Time to bake really good cookies and sing really bad Christmas carols. Time to make love visible through relational giving.

[Love All]

When Jesus loved, He loved in ways never imagined. Though rich, he became poor to love the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. He played to the margins. By spending less at Christmas we have the opportunity to join Him in giving resources to those who need help the most. As a church, we have decided to come together and give towards Kid's Alive, an organization helping at-risk youth and orphans in the Dominican Republic. One less gift. One unbelievable present in the name of Christ.

(www.adventconspiracy.org)



Escaping the Conspiracy [Gift Ideas]

- Snail Mail—Commit to sending a handwritten card or letter on a weekly or monthly basis for the next year to a loved one.
- Retell the Christmas story, family-style. Wrap up each piece of a nativity set in tissue paper along with a corresponding portion of the Christmas story. Distribute the pieces to each family member and take turns unwrapping them in order with each person telling their part of the story.
- Surprise Mom, Grandma, or a teacher with words of wisdom. Make a soulful first-aid kit by cutting bandage shapes from colored paper, writing out motivating quotes and well-wishes, and presenting them in a doctored-up bandage box.
- Buy pretty cookie tins with fun designs at a discount store and line them with tissue paper. The night before you give a gift, bake the cookies, let them cool, and then make the cookie tin pretty! To make them even more junk free, wrap the cookies in a shiny plastic wrapping tissue and tie with a ribbon!
- Create a list of 10 things you'd like to do with a person, like going for a walk, watching a favorite movie, and volunteering together. Write a card and say something like, "For Christmas this year I want to share 10 things with you! I'm going to call you once a month to set a date where we get share our time doing our favorite things."



DEBT REDUCTION WORKSHOP

GET YOUR FINANCES READY FOR 2009! WE WILL BE HOLDING A WORKSHOP WHERE YOU ARE INVITED TO BEGIN DEVELOPING A DEBT REDUCTION PLAN. SESSIONS WILL BE DEC. 11TH AND 18TH FROM 6:30-8:30 PM AT FIRST FREE. CONTACT JOEL BURNS AT 612-724-6510 OR REXXSOX@USFAMILY.NET IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

"God's View of Christmas"

4:00 pm

Nursery provided for Infants up to Age 2

Women's Guild Christmas Luncheon

1:00 Dec. 2, Vi Fjellman's party room, 6566 France Ave. The speaker will be Kristin Hink from the Marie Sandvik Mission. Bring your filled shoe boxes for the Mission. Cost is \$7.

Creekside Clubs and the Youth Group will *NOT* be meeting on Wednesdays from December 17 thru January 7

*** Both Youth Group and Clubs will resume on January 14***

There will be a parent's meeting for the Youth Group parents on January 7th