

Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji

ANNUAL REPORT

2 0 2 5 A N N U A L C E L E B R A T I O N & V I S I O N M E E T I N G
S U N D A Y , J A N U A R Y 2 5 , 2 0 2 6

**BECOMING DEEPLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS
TOGETHER**



MEMBERSHIP LIST

Full Membership

Adams, Joe	Carpenter, Hannah	Guntzel, Joni	Larson, Miles
Adams, Tanya	Carpenter, Jeff	Guntzel, Todd	Lauderbaugh, Elaine
Adkins, Mike	Carpenter, Micah	Gustafson, David	Limarii, Lorina
Adkins, Sue	Cartier, Patrick	Gustafson, Kathy	Lish, Michael
Aguillo, Connie	Caster, Allen	Gutz, Julie	Lish, Sharon
Anderson, Bethany	Caster, Jessica	Gutz, Mike	Lofgren, Elisabeth
Anderson, Richard	Christiansen, Shirley	Hall, Neil	Lofgren, Patti
Baer, Deb	Conway, Chuck	Hall, Serena	Lofgren, Rachael
Baer, John	Conway, Jan	Halverson, Laurie	Lund, Gene
Beighley, Megan	Crow, Katrin	Halverson, Tom	Lund, Joni
Berg, Connie	Cutler, Sue	Hannah, Mary	Mauer, Jan
Bergsven, Dan	Decker, Jerry	Hartzberg, Bev	McCray, C.J.
Bergsven, Kari	de Dios, Laura	Helweg, Laura	McCray, Corbin
Bidinger, Cindy	Dols, Lorrie	Helweg, Rylie	McCray, Tammy
Black, Elaine	Dols, Michael	Helweg, Stephen	McKain, Mishele
Bodenheimer, Kristi	Draheim, Bernadine	Hensley, Bev	McKain, Randy
Bodenheimer, Ron	Drebelbis, Jerry	Hensley, Milt	Meidinger, Janice
Bohlmann, Melissa	Drebelbis, Susie	Hewitt, Robin	Miller, Ethan
Bollman, Dennis	Eastling, Becky	Hewitt, Terry	Miller, Nikki
Bollman, Sharon	Eastling, Brian	Hodgson, Jenny	Miller, Steven
Borders, Rissa	Elyea, Roy	Hodgson, Jim	Mustful, Brandon
Borders, Tayler	Emery, Gardell	Hopkins, Maryalys	Mustful, Shelly
Bouchie, Linda	Emery, Judy	Hovestol, Dan	Naegeli, Marcia
Bouchie, Ron	Engelstad, Laura	Hovestol, Gwenn	Nelson, Claudette
Brown, Deb	Engelstad, Scott	Howes, Holly	Nicholson, Justin
Brown, Steve	Eriksson, Arlon	Howes, LaDon	Nicholson, Kara
Buchan, Mandi	Eriksson, Karen	Hubbell, Bill	Nicol, Gladys
Buchan, Scott	Eriksson, Kay Sue	Johnson, Debbie	Nordquist, Chuck
Burpo, Justin	Eriksson, Peter	Johnson, Jerry	Nordquist, Gretchen
Capes, Barb	Evans, Daniel	Johnson, Lydia	Norvold, Dan
Capes, Dave	Evans, Karissa	Kaehne, Bruce	Norvold, Stacy
Carlson, Brandon	Fritz, Mike	Kaehne, Jake	Novak, Steve
Carlson, Jan	Frost, Dan	Kaehne, Lynnea	Novak, Zaida
Carlson, Karen	Frost, Jack	Kaehne, Marsha	Nygren, Eric
Carlson, Mark	Frost, Leanne	Kaml, Kim	Nygren, Lindsay
Carlson, Mishel	Frost, Sherry	Kasprick, Jacqui	Oakes, Bill
Carlson, Nicki	Fultz, Josie	Kihlstadius, Gene (Art)	Oakes, Laurie
Carlson, Reed	Garrett, Linda	Knudson, David	Paddock, Danny
Carlson, Troy	Graf, Amy	Koehnen, Becky	Paddock, Kandi
Carpenter, Daniel	Guderian, James	Larson, Steve	Parthun, Anna
Carpenter, Dawn	Guderian, Justine	Larson, Mary	Parthun, Chris

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Parthun, Tracy	Thomas, Paul	<u>Associate Members</u>
Paulson, Brad	Trosen, Kate	Hoefakker, Gib
Paulson, Lanee	Trego, Mark	Nelson, Natalie
Paulson, Sarah	Tusler, Jodey	
Pederson, Jon	Vogel, Dave	
Pederson, Kathie	Vogel, Joyce	<u>Beloved Family</u>
Posner, Dan	Wall, Lexi	Daube, Douglas
Posner, Mechelle	Westlund, Craig	Daube, Emily
Raukar, Maria	Westlund, Jessica	Friesen, Sarah
Raukar, Tim	Wilson, Nate	Hendrickson, Jan
Recine, Melanie	Wilson, Taumi	Martin, Fred
Recine, Vinny	Wold, Bonnie	Martin, Roberta
Ritchie, Jim	Wold, Ken	Salscheider, Dorothy
Ritchie, LaMae	Zachow, Drew	Salscheider, Karl
Robeck, Jason	Zylka, Alexa	Thorsgard, Gerri
Robeck, Sarah		Williams, Linda
Rogers, Carol		
Rogers, Francis		
Roline, Arlan		
Roline, Joyce		
Salscheider, Joel		
Salscheider, Nathan		
Sandwick, Rita		
Schlador, Launa		
Schlador, Paul		
Shindelar, John		
Shindelar, Sherry		
Shutter, Linda		
Smith, Ellen		
Smith, Liz		
Smith, Ramona		
Smith, Rob		
Smith, Terry		
Story, Caroline		
Strong, Joe		
Strong, Susan		
Tader, Duane		
Tader, Joy		
Teufer, Patsy		
Thomas, Jacob		
Thomas, Karin		
		<u>Inactive members (19)</u>
		<u>Active Members (201)</u>

STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN

EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF BEMIDJI



MISSION

What we are supposed to be doing as a church.



VISION

A picture of what the mission will look like when it is realized.

WE WILL BE A CHURCH WHO

- GLORIFIES GOD IN ALL OF LIFE
- IS TRANSFORMED BY GOD'S WORD
- SERVES AND CARES FOR EACH OTHER IN LOVE
- WELCOMES ALL PEOPLE AND CARES FOR OUR NEIGHBORS
- PERSONALLY SHARES THE GOSPEL LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY



CORE VALUES

The biblical beliefs that empower and guide our ministries.

GOD'S GLORY

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

CARING FOR THE BODY OF BELIEVERS

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

EVANGELIZING THE LOST

**BECOMING
DEEPLY DEVOTED
FOLLOWERS OF
JESUS TOGETHER.**

DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY



A plan to guide disciples toward maturity in Christ.



ASSOCIATE PASTOR

PASTOR ERIC NYGREN

GOD OUR REFUGE

When I don't know how to pray, I turn to the Psalms for help. I often go to Psalm 57 whenever I feel afraid or overwhelmed and need to find shelter.

David begins this psalm by saying, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by (Psa. 57:1, ESV)."

Does anybody else feel like storm is the word of the year for 2025? Both literally and figuratively, together we've weathered the storms this year.

But notice how that same Psalm ends: "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" (Psa. 57:9-11, ESV).

I could write to you about the storms of 2025, but I won't, not because I wish to ignore them, but because there is more to the story. Here are four things that I'm praising God for from 2025.

LIFE GROUPS

If I sound like a broken record, too bad. Let me tell you what the Lord has done this year through Life Groups. I could tell you that we continue to have over 100 adults participating in Life Groups, but that doesn't tell the whole story. I could tell you that we added a few new groups this year so more people can participate, but that doesn't tell the whole story.

What I want to tell you is that men and women, older and younger, singles, couples, and widows are all sharing life together in genuine fellowship. They love one another, pray for one another, study the Scriptures together, eat together, and care for one another week after week. This brings me great joy. If you're not yet in a Life Group, is 2026 the year you join?

FERVENT PRAYER

Both personally and here at church, I continue to direct my focus toward fervent prayer. Fervent isn't a word we use a lot (right, Dan Evans?), but it's a word we used in our Strategic Ministry Plan. As we continue to work at implementing our Strategic Ministry Plan that we adopted in 2024, we have made the commitment as a church family to engage in fervent prayer.

We continue to gather every month for Second Sunday Prayer. Thank you to those who have helped lead our prayer time, and those who faithfully join us for prayer. We've also tried to gather a couple of times for Open Prayer, an informal time to join others in praying for our church. We try to have someone available in the Prayer Corner after every service to pray. These are just a few examples of how we're engaging in fervent prayer. Would you join us?

PASTOR ERIC NYGREN'S REPORT CONTINUED...

GRACE MARRIAGE

During the last quarter of 2025 we did a test launch of a monthly ministry called Grace Marriage. Over three 90-minute sessions, married couples had the opportunity to think about their relationship through the lens of the gospel. The curriculum emphasized pursuing a grace-based marriage, rather than a performance-based relationship. About 80% of the time, couples had the chance to work through the material privately with their spouse. For most, the evening turned into a much-needed date night (with dessert!).

We are prayerfully considering bringing on Grace Marriage as a full-year marriage ministry at E-Free Bemidji. May the Lord continue to form and strengthen grace-based marriages at our church in 2026!

OUR STAFF TEAM

I had the privilege of serving on two staff search committees (Youth & Young Adults Pastor; Office Manager) in 2025 with a great team of people. Yes, we had a lot of meetings, but it was worth it. Praise the Lord that he brought us Pastor Shane, Kristine, and their son, Harrison in August! What a joy it's been to shepherd the flock alongside Pastor Shane. All of a sudden, he's the rookie pastor, and I'm the 20-year veteran. How did that happen?

In November, we hired Luke Hockenson as our new Custodian. What a hard worker! He's done a fantastic job cleaning, performing maintenance, and setting up rooms in this big, busy ministry space. A little over a week after Luke started, we officially hired Lex Zylka as our new Office Manager. I was delighted to tell Lex that she could remove the word "Interim" from her job title on the back of the bulletin.

THANK YOU

Thank you, E-Free Bemidji church family, for the joy of serving this flock as one of your shepherds. It's a privilege to be your pastor. Thank you for your prayers, kind words of encouragement, acts of love, and your support through a stormy season. To God be the glory!

In Him,
Pastor Eric

PASTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

PASTOR SHANE FLEMING

MINISTRY SUMMARY

I have been blessed and honored to lead our Youth and Young Adult Ministries this past fall. I was hired in August and we hit the ground running right into VBS week, which was truly wonderful to experience and join in on. This is currently my first year in this position and I am so thankful for the opportunity to serve Bemidji E-Free. My leaders (22 in total) and I serve alongside each other on Wednesday evenings for Youth Group, to enjoy worship, games, messages, and small groups. We are blessed to have a Worship Team that is fully student led. They are remarkably talented and we are blessed to have a team like them. Along with them, our tech team (led by Danny Paddock) is also student led, and we appreciate all the work they do. We also enjoyed going to Fall Fling this past October, we had 41 people in total and spent time playing, rock wall climbing, crate stacking, worshiping, understanding God's word together, and scoring one very EPIC touchdown! We are currently in a series on the fruits of the Spirit called, "A Virtuous Life." God has been showing us so much in His word. Through a combination of teachings by myself and others, we engage with and encounter God through worship, different passages and teaching styles, alongside small group ministry. The Youth Ministry would not be what it is without the leadership that God has placed around me, and I want to say how truly thankful I am for each volunteer and small group leader we have. Your effort, sacrifice, and leadership do not go unseen or unappreciated.

ANCHOR

We have continued our Anchor Group for our Young Adults Ministry this year as well. We meet regularly on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00 PM. It has been wonderful getting to know many of the young adults in this community and church over these past few months. We continue to grow in relationship through Bible study, prayer, hanging out together, and occasionally going to Perkins for Pie and Coffee Nights. We just started walking through a series on the I AM statements of Jesus through the Gospel of John, and are diving into understanding what a real, honest, and vulnerable relationship looks like with Jesus. Many of us know the "stats" and the sayings of Jesus, but do we truly KNOW him intimately and personally? Join us as we unpack what this looks like and strive to grow in relationship with our Personal Savior and God.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking into the future, my goal is fairly simple: I want to establish and maintain (by God's power and will, not of my own) a Youth/Young Adult Ministry culture where we genuinely know, love, and worship God. We won't be just a group that completes a program or message series and moves to the next thing; but we want to be empowered by the Spirit in not only understanding God's word, but living it out, loving the truth and the light that sets us free, and striving to show others the same. I am also looking forward to reaching outside the four walls of the church, and finding ways to get connected more in serving others through the Food Shelf, Ruby's Pantry, our local church body, and more. Having a relationship with Jesus that is real and authentic moves us to serve local, nationally, and internationally. I am so grateful for the opportunity God has placed in front of us, and pray for many more years to serve and lead with those here at the Bemidji Evangelical Free Church.

1 Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

KIDS MINISTRY DIRECTOR

AMY GRAF

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

SALVATION AND BAPTISM

We had several students choose to follow Jesus and were baptized in 2025. Colossians 2:6-7 was a reminder for me as a leader/teacher of the truth to continue to encourage kids and families to build their lives on Christ. When we choose to follow Jesus daily, practice spiritual disciplines each day, and abide in Christ, our faith grows, peace and joy fills our souls, and our hearts overflow with gratitude because of Jesus.

WEEKLY DISCIPLESHIP

Wednesday Kids Club/Sunday School/Beginners/Kids Church

Each week, leaders come together to teach kids God's truth and love. We began a new curriculum this fall for Kids Club/Kids Church that students and leaders are really enjoying. We are walking through the Bible and God's Big Story that points to Jesus, our Savior.

LEADERS

I am so grateful for committed leaders who love kids and want them to know and follow Jesus. They have incredible passion for Sunday School, Kid's Club, children, and families to know God's truth and to grow deeper in their faith and relationships. Sunday School, Kids Club, Kids Church, and Nursery cannot happen without committed leaders serving.

EVENTS

Valentine's Party/Shamineau 46 Retreat/2 Movie Nights/Foster the Family Mother's Day Celebration and New Year's Eve Party.

Each event had a purpose to gather, fellowship, play, and encourage one another in our faith.

OUTREACH

We began a new type of outreach this summer where we partnered with Headwaters Regional Development. They strive to meet the needs of low income families within our community, build relationships with them, and gain their trust. They meet regularly with residents at Ridgeway and Conifer Apartments. We joined them by serving meals, playing with kids, and building relationships at their special dinners this past summer. It was amazing how many volunteers served, and I hope everyone deepened their faith by learning more about how to live and love like Jesus.

Thank you for prayers, encouragement, and support for me and the Kids Ministry. Please pray for this year that more kids say "yes" to following Jesus. Also, pray for more volunteers for Sunday morning Beginners/Kids Church. It would be wonderful to separate these age groups in the near future.

May God fill you all with peace and hope in Him each day.

Thank you,

Amy Graf, Kids Ministry Director

VISITATION CAREGIVER TOM HALVERSON

This year, several of those I visited regularly were called home to be with the Lord. I attended six funerals and had the privilege of preaching one funeral message. Additionally, with the birth of my granddaughter, I have been babysitting for my daughter two to three days a week. These factors limited my visits to approximately 51 people in 2025.

Some of these visits took place out of town at Bagley Hospital and were supplemented by phone calls and emails. Beyond regular visitations, I assisted with yard cleanup for elderly members who were affected by the storm. I also participated in staff meetings, maintained a life group, and met frequently with Pastor Jerry to provide updates. A highlight of the year was the fellowship at the senior potluck, where I provided a chalk talk and frosted cinnamon rolls.

The most important aspect of this ministry remains the time of prayer prioritized during each visit. I feel truly blessed by those I visit, as they are individuals who are worthy of honor for the testimony they have maintained through their service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To Him be all the glory!

Best regards,

Tom Halverson

SENIOR CONNECTION SCOTT & LAURA ENGELSTAD

Our Senior Connection group is a ministry to adults over 60. We meet monthly for a potluck and program event that features food, faith, fellowship, and fun. In 2025 we averaged about 28 people in attendance, with 42 for our biggest group. Over the year we enjoyed life stories and testimonies from Jerome Decker, Len & Sandi Carlson, and were the "studio audience" for Pastor Eric's podcast as he interviewed Dave Vogel. In practical matters we learned from the local Sheriff's Dept. about scams to watch out for, and heard details about Hospice from Teresa, Chaplain for Sanford Hospice. Scott and Laura shared devotionals on Friendship, God as our Father, Palm Sunday, the real St. Nicholas, and on Zechariah and Elizabeth. Jan Parham took us on a trip to Africa (by way of pictures), and Harley Wilson brought beautiful carved and painted birds and animals to illustrate his life story. A highlight of the year was Tom Halverson beginning his chalk drawing ministry with us. Throw in a little bingo and some jokes and quizzes, and it makes a very enjoyable year. We hope to encourage our seniors to focus on the ways they can continue to serve God and be involved in our church. Scott always reminds us, "There is no retiring from the Christian life!" Feel free to contact Laura for more details at 218-209-8190.

ELDER BOARD JERRY DREBELBIS, CHAIR

2026 ELDERS

Jerry Drebelsis, Chair

Jim Hodgson

Pastor Shane Fleming

Mark Carlson, Vice-chair

Randy McKain, Secretary

Pastor Eric Nygren

Terry Hewitt

Paul Thomas

Rom. 12:10 "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

1 Cor. 1:10 "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

To say that the year 2025 was a tumultuous and chaotic year would be an understatement. The congregation went through two very difficult and troubling events that were unexpected. Looking back over the past year, the elder board was very thankful to both the staff and other ministry leaders for their wisdom, spiritual strength, and faith in the decisions the board made. Their prayers, understanding, and concerns are greatly appreciated. We also were very aware of the congregation's concerns and confusion when details, for privacy reasons, could not be disclosed. We thank you for your continued presence and understanding. Again, to say the least, 2025 was a very difficult year as we looked to our Lord and the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us wisdom.

I am mindful in the verses referenced above of how we as a body of Christ are to be unified in our worship, fellowship and work together for the kingdom. As we look ahead into the new year I pray that we will remain steadfast in unity for the sake of the Gospel and our Lord.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Drebelsis, Elder Chair

TRUSTEE BOARD TODD GUNTZEL, CHAIR

On behalf of the trustees I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your generosity and faithfulness to the finances and ministries of the church.

The primary responsibilities of the trustee board are to manage the finances, assets, and physical property of this church. Each month the board meets to review the finances and address the needs of the church.

What a year it's been!

In May, we were able to pay off the church mortgage! What a blessing to be able to put that behind us!

I know you'll all remember June 21st - the storm of the century for Bemidji! The storm did a considerable amount of damage to the church (as well as many of our homes & yards). It's hard to consider that kind of storm & damage as a blessing. With the help of insurance & your generous giving above & beyond normal, we were able to pay our rather high deductible & get the church reshingled & repair the flat roof on the gym. It was a huge "mountain", but together, we were able to conquer it. That will help us in the future address other maintenance projects sooner that were farther down the priority list. Thank you all for stepping up!

We have also been challenged with staffing issues. After a lot of searching, we have hired a new Office Manager (Lex Zylka) & a new Custodian (Luke Hockenson) & are happy to have them join our staff!

As we look forward to 2026, let us continue to be faithful to the ministries of Christ's church here at E-Free Bemidji.

Todd Guntzel, Trustee Chair

2026 TRUSTEES

Richard Anderson

Nicki Carlson

Dan Frost

Todd Guntzel, Chair

Holly Howes, Vice-chair

David Knudson, Secretary

Jessica Westlund, Appointed to finish term

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS TEAM

PETER ERIKSSON, CHAIR

The goal of the Global Connections Team is to promote our church's involvement in missions locally and around the world. We meet on a monthly basis to support our Global Partners in their efforts to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We pay close attention to the financial needs of our partners as we make funding decisions. Unfortunately, the financial needs of our partners always exceeds our ability to fund. The generosity of our church in supporting missions financially is greatly appreciated.

We recently added new global partners through the Evangelical Free Church of America International Mission, ReachGlobal. We have been encouraged as we have gotten to know our workers serving with MENA, ReachGlobal's mission in the Middle East and North Africa. A Barnabas team within our church meets monthly to pray for the MENA team. We have begun supporting David and Rachel Anderson who are ministering to Native American people in northern Minnesota. One of the Life Groups has committed to supporting the Andersons as a Barnabas prayer team. I encourage many individuals in our church to consider supporting global partners through the Barnabas Team Ministry. Established Life Groups may want to consider supporting global partners in this way.

We continue to support our global partners who are working among the Bengali Muslims, our adopted people group. We are currently in the process of making plans for a short term missions team to travel to Bangladesh in the fall of 2026. The Global Connections Team supports ministries internationally and locally. One of the local ministries we support is Camp Oak Hills. We believe in the ongoing ministry to young people through camp ministry, and each summer we support those from our church who serve at the camp.

We want to continue to encourage involvement in short term missions opportunities. We are in the process of planning potential short term trips for the summer of 2026. Please consider how you can be involved in reaching people around the world with the Gospel message. Thank you for supporting global partners by giving financially and praying faithfully.

Peter Eriksson, Global Connections Team Chair

2026 GCT

Peter Eriksson, Chair
Justin Burpo
Daniel Carpenter
Sue Cutler
Lizzy Lofgren
Rachael Lofgren
Justin Nicholson
Eric Nygren
Sherry Shindelar
Karin T.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY LINDSAY NYGREN AND LAUNA SCHLADOR

OVERFLOW

Last April, our team was sad to hear that both Debbie Johnson and Mishele Carlson were stepping down from their positions as co-chairs for our ministry. The once-a-month Monday night Overflow events have been such a blessing the last few years, and we wanted to see them continue. I took the opportunity to fill the hole in leadership as part of my internship with Oak Hills College, with Lindsay Nygren acting as both co-chair and co-supervisor.

We hosted four events in the fall, each with a different community outreach focus. We are overflowing with God's blessing, and have been pleased to share our abundance with the Bemidji Community Food Shelf, Village of Hope, and Foster the Family, as well as our own church's Global Partners.

One thing that has been on my heart is that every woman in the church, starting with those who are attending our events, would feel seen and included in the church body. To that end, our leadership team has been reaching out to our ladies via text, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings.

Coming up this spring, we have four more events on the calendar, with four more community outreach opportunities planned, beginning with donations for the Northwoods Battered Women's Shelter during our January 26 "His Radiant Bride" event. Other fun and encouraging events to look forward to are a night of pickle-ball and games and an Easter talk from Gale Struthers. As always, our leadership team is open to more ladies who want to invest in the lives of other women in our church and our community!

- Launa Schlador, Women's Ministry Co-leader

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY FELLOWSHIP

In terms of the women's Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) here at E-Free, the 2025 calendar year saw the close of the fifth study in the book of Revelation. Teresa Kuleta and I met Thursday nights with our groups to walk through questions we worked on throughout the week, share prayer requests and listen to a lecture tying the lesson together. From year to year, BSF welcomes back a lot of the same ladies and ushers in some new ones, maintaining around 30 or so gathering to grow spiritually and enjoy sweet times of fellowship. In the Fall the number of women who had signed up for our sixth study, Exile & Return (covering portions of many OT books), required another discussion group leader to join the ranks and God provided Polly Fafach. We now have three discussion groups meeting weekly with the ability to welcome more.

- Lindsay Nygren, Women's Ministry Co-leader

MEN'S MINISTRY

We enjoyed three awesome Men's Breakfasts in 2025, gathering together in April, September, and December. Thanks to the guys in the kitchen and those that set up and cleaned up after the meal. Not only did we enjoy lots of good food, we also were fed by God's word and were encouraged by a few men who shared their faith story with the group. The breakfasts continue to be well-attended by the men of E-Free Bemidji, as well as a number of friends, neighbors, and coworkers in the community. There is no charge for the breakfast, but we do encourage those in attendance to give a love gift that goes toward our Youth Bus Fund. Thanks to Bill Oakes, Terry Hewitt, Pete Eriksson, and many others for spearheading these events.

Speaking of breakfast, last April our whole church family enjoyed another of our annual Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfasts in between services. Hundreds of pancakes were flipped and served by the boys and young men in our Trail Life troop. Unfortunately, 2025 saw our Trail Life ministry come to a close after just a few wonderful years. This was a difficult decision, but was the consensus of the troop leaders. Thanks to Allen Caster and his leadership team for pouring into the lives of these boys and young men as they grew in discipleship.

We had two early morning Men's Bible Studies running throughout the year. Our Wednesday morning Men's Bible Study worked through a few studies over the course of the year (along with a few gallons of fresh-brewed coffee and a few dozen donuts from Raphael's). Thanks to Jerome Decker for loading the videos, Jerry Drebelsis for leading the discussion, and those who had the coffee hot and ready. On Friday mornings, we started a new study called Heart of a Man, utilizing a video series through the book of 1 Timothy. We attempted expanding the study to Thursday evenings, but Friday mornings seemed to be the preferred option. Thanks to George Kessel for getting the building and the coffee ready at the crack of dawn on Fridays.

Brothers, whether we're chewing on a piece of bacon, washing down a bite of donut with a sip of coffee, or simply feasting on the word of God, may it be true of us that, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV).

In Him,

Pastor Eric (on behalf of the Men's Ministry Team)

WORSHIP COMMITTEE PASTOR ERIC NYGREN, CHAIR

The Worship Committee (a.k.a. The WC6) is tasked with planning our Sunday morning and special worship services, including our annual Good Friday and Christmas Eve services. The 2025 team was made up of Laura Engelstad (8:30 Music Director), Jason Robeck (10:45 Music Director), Dan Evans (A/V Supervisor), Reed Carlson, Pastor Eric Nygren, and Pastor Jerry Johnson.

In addition to bi-monthly meetings, in August the WC6 also conducted an assessment of the worship ministry as part of our church's Strategic Ministry Plan. Later that month, we held another Musicians & Tech Forum to receive feedback and to say thank you to our many wonderful music and tech volunteers. We also distributed a survey to the congregation at the end of the summer to hear from the congregation about the 9:30 Combined Worship Services.

In 2025, Laura Engelstad handed off the baton as our WC6 Chair. We want to thank Laura for all her years of service in this role. Just before Christmas, our church's former Choir director, Mr. Ken Wold went home to be with the Lord. Though we miss him, it was a blessing to honor him and give thanks to God at Mr. Wold's Celebration of Life service in early January. Hallelujah!

As we enter 2026, we know that our church is in the midst of a difficult season. In the coming months, let us not merely come to church or attend a worship service, but as the Scriptures instruct us, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24-25, NIV).

May our song and the prayer of all our hearts be, "Father, guide us as we gather here."

In Him,

Pastor Eric (on behalf of the WC6)

8:30 MUSIC MINISTRY LAURA ENGELSTAD

"Come, let us sing for joy to Jehovah; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation."
Psalm 95:1

This past year has been a time of growth and change for the 8:30 service music ministry. I continue to oversee the music used at this service, scheduling musicians and special music, choosing weekly music, assisting in planning special services, sending reminders, and keeping records.

Through the year we have been recruiting and mentoring new songleaders and musicians. Each week I plan a mix of old favorite songs and newer music. Over the summer we were able to enjoy the music of organist Mary S. from Iowa, who spends time at her cabin here in Bemidji. And in December we grieved and yet rejoiced that Ken Wold, our long-time choir director, went home to heaven.

For the summer and all five Sundays of Advent, Jason Robeck and I worked together to plan music for the 9:30 combined services. This is a good way to focus on unity as a church, and expand our musical horizons. We are learning to appreciate the many ways we can worship God together. In 2026 we hope to build a repertoire of songs that our church body knows well, and can sing enthusiastically to our Lord. We would also love to involve more instrumentalists and singers. Your ideas are always welcome!

~ Laura Engelstad, 8:30 Music Director

10:45 MUSIC MINISTRY JASON ROBECK

2025 was a steady and faithful year for the 10:45 worship team. Our team continued to serve with consistency, humility, and a genuine desire to lead our church in worship each week.

We welcomed a few new volunteers and blessed others as they moved into new seasons. I'm grateful for every person who contributed their time and gifts to the ministry.

The Lord used this last year to deepen our team's heart for worship and to reinforce the importance of serving with joy, preparation, and spiritual focus. My hope for the coming year is to continue developing leaders, encouraging musical growth, and nurturing a strong sense of community within the team.

I am thankful for everyone on this team and know that the Lord is going to do some amazing things this year.

~ Jason Robeck, 10:45 Music Director

CHOIR

IAN TROSEN

I, Ian Trosen, am the current director for the E-Free Church of Bemidji Choir. Tayler Borders and I began the positions as co-directors at the start of the fall season in 2024, but Tayler had to withdraw for reasons of time constraints. We will miss him. The great Kenneth Wold was the previous director and held that position since its beginning in 1988. Unfortunately, he recently passed into the Lord's arms on December 19, 2025, and his funeral took place on January 9th, 2026. He is survived by his wife Bonnie. May he rest in peace and may we honor him with music together. Laura Engelstad has been our faithful pianist for the choir since that very first year. We greatly appreciate her spirit and skill in assisting the choir, not only in accompanying the choir, but also in planning, communication, and organization.

NUMBERS

The choir has gained a few singers this fall season, and we happily accept anyone who wishes to worship the Lord with us. See either myself or Laura for information and to sign up.

PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE

The choir has undergone a change from previous years. We now sing one Sunday a month, typically the last Sunday. We have two Tuesday practices from 7:15 - 8:30 PM each month: one the week before and the other the Tuesday directly before Sunday singing. We sang a miniature Christmas cantata for the advent season, and it went quite well. We are very much looking forward to the Easter season. We will finish off in May with a Sunday afternoon finale concert made up of selections from our entire pool of songs from the fall and spring seasons. The handbell choir will also be part of that concert. We will take the summer off until August, when we start back up. However, one Tuesday of the summer we will likely gather together again for a "Summer Choir" event.

The opportunity to encourage the congregation and help them to express their worship in singing is a great privilege. We hope you'll consider joining us if you wish to sing praise to the Lord.

Sincerely,

Ian Trosen, E-Free Choir Director

"Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods." Psalm 95:1-3

HANDBELLS **TRACY PARTHUN**

LOOKING BACK

As we "Ring in the New Year" (2026), E-Free Bemidji's Ring Jubilant Praise Handbell Choir is beginning its 30th consecutive year of ministry! From a fledging group of inexperienced ringers and 2 octaves of handbells, we have grown to include 3 1/2 octaves of handbells and 2 octaves of handchimes through the generosity of those who've been blessed by this unique musical experience. We have grown in our skill level and have a good core group of 12- 14 ringers with some "snow birds" drifting in and out during the year. We have praised the Lord by ringing in full choirs, small ensembles, solos, and bell trees, accompanied by various instruments that have complemented this group.

LOOKING AHEAD

This past year we have been blessed with the leadership of Brent Ekstrom and the opportunities he has given us to ring more challenging pieces of handbell arrangements. We've also welcomed some new ringers and enjoyed the dedication & skill they've contributed to this ensemble. During rehearsals we have fellowship time where we can share our concerns and lift each other up in prayer, which we believe further solidifies this small group. It has been our joy to share this extraordinary and unique musical experience with those who are not familiar with handbells. We pray that this ministry blesses all who hear our lyrical praise offerings. It's all to the Glory of God!

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song." Psalm 28:7

- Tracy Parthun

AUDIO/VISUAL SUPERVISOR **DAN EVANS**

LOOKING AHEAD

Year-End Update 2025: Sound, Projection, and Livestream

As we wrap up 2025, I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who serves on the A/V team. This year had its share of challenges and blessings, and your time and commitment made a real difference. Because of you, our church is able to worship together in a clear, smooth, and meaningful way.

Looking ahead, we're hoping to make some upgrades this year, either by adding sound panels or replacing the front projectors. We're also excited to move to Resi for livestreaming in 2026, which will help improve the quality and reliability of our online services. This will take effect in February and we will be leaving Boxcast. We're always in need of more volunteers as this ministry continues to grow. No experience is required—training is provided, and you'll be part of a supportive team. If you're interested in serving, we'd love to have you.

To our current volunteers: thank you for showing up week after week and giving your best behind the scenes. Your dedication does not go unnoticed, and this ministry wouldn't run without you.

As we head into the new year, we're grateful for what God has done and excited to see how He continues to work through this team.

- Dan Evans, Audio/Visual Supervisor

FINANCIAL AUDIT / REVIEW REPORT

JANUARY 19, 2026

Financial Audit / Review Report
EFC Trustee Committee

On January 19, 2026 Nicki Carlson, EFC Trustee and Jessica Westlund, EFC Member met with Jerome Decker, the EFC Treasurer. The purpose of our meeting was to complete an Audit/Review of the EFC financial activities. The review was limited to activity in 2025. It is noted that on-site, paper documents go back to at least 2017. These paper documents would include bank statements, receipts and invoices, billings, payroll data, along with monthly and annual trustee reports.

Jessica and I requested that Jerome provide us with two random months of bank statements, which are provided by Security BankUSA, along with his reconciliation and the monthly reports to the Trustee Board. Jessica selected September, and I chose March for the review. We selected randomly various checks and payments and requested the accompanying invoice to match the actual check. Several were checked in regard to checks written to various individuals and vendors. No discrepancies were found. The EFC treasurer is very detail oriented and worked through his filing system with ease to find documentation of all expenditures. The EFC treasurer cuts between 75 to 120 checks each month. The EFC treasurer attends each monthly trustee meeting and provides a report to the Trustees with all expenditures by line item. There are over 119-line items which show all expenditures for the month. This allows the trustees to review and question any expenditure. The trustees will compare the line item versus budget on a monthly basis and a year-to-date basis. This would appear to be a sound practice in tracking expenditures and reviewing whether the Church is on budget.

The EFC treasurer has no check signing authority. Only trustees are authorized as signatories for the bank checking account. Usually, 4 or 5 trustees are authorized. This is reviewed in January to make sure of adequate coverage. The Pastors are not given check signing authority. The EFC Financial Secretary, Kandi Paddock (who receives the Churches tithes and offerings, and deposits them) does not have any check signing authority either. This appears to be a sound practice and provides good separation of powers in handling Church funds. The financial secretary's duties of depositing funds are completely separate from the treasurer's duties. The two officers have separate secure computers.

The Church continues to work with the accounting firm of Krigbaum & Jones to handle all payroll activity. All payroll is completed through electronic transfer to employees' checking accounts. All State and Federal withholding taxes are also handled by Krigbaum & Jones via electronic transfer. The employees provide a signed and dated worksheet with specific hours worked to the accountant's office, and then employees are paid.

The EFC treasurer also reconciles the Youth Group's checkbook on at least a quarterly basis. Activity on this account runs between 2 and 10 checks per month and the balance is under \$10,000. Having the EFC treasurer oversee this checking account with the youth pastor makes sense. The Benevolence Fund's checkbook is handled by the pastors (these funds are not part of the general budget). Pastors can sign for checks up to \$300. Over that amount would require elder approval. Pastor Eric maintains a detailed list of expenditures. Reviewed monthly by the Elder Board.

FINANCIAL AUDIT / REVIEW REPORT CONTINUED...

The petty cash account is handled by the church office manager. The maximum in this account is a cash account of \$500 (currency). The office manager utilizes the cash for small expenditures, as other staff will present a bill, invoice, or receipt for payment. As the balance in the petty cash account decreases, the office manager will submit all bills, receipts, or invoices to the EFC treasurer to replenish the petty cash account. This task is completed 3 or 4 times a year. This procedure appears sound.

The EFC of Bemidji maintains two credit cards: One through Security BankUSA (Elon) and a Capital One card. The Elon card is used for ongoing recurring monthly charges. And the Capital One card is for various staff needs that are not ongoing. The office manager requires receipts and invoices as the credit card is utilized. These receipts, billings, and invoices are then provided to the EFC treasurer when paying the credit card bill monthly. The credit cards are paid off each month. The office manager's tracking of the usage is detailed and thorough.

Jerome Decker also provided us with his Blue Book, which contains very specific and detailed instructions and info on what may be required in his absence. The Book is very thorough and detailed, including contact people at Krigbaum & Jones.

Overall, Jessica and I found the procedures and checks & balances in place are adequate to ensure the Church's funds are handled properly and safely. We found the EFC treasurer to be very detailed and very qualified for the position.

*This written report prepared by Nicki Carlson and Jessica Westlund.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

	12/31/25	
GENERAL FUND		
GENERAL CHECKING ACCOUNT	\$ 60,004	
GENERAL SAVINGS ACCOUNT	\$ 126,071	
PETTY CASH	\$ 500	
TOTAL CHECKING AND SAVINGS	\$ 186,575	
DESIGNATED FUNDS BALANCE		
CHOIR FUND	\$ 1,752	
WORSHIP FUND	\$ 21,508	
MEMORIAL FUND	\$ 1,553	
SHORT TERM MISSIONS (Golf)	\$ 2,815	
HANDBELLS FUND	\$ 56	
CHILDRENS MINISTRIES	\$ 751	
Christmas Decorations	\$ 400	
WED. NIGHT MEALS	\$ -	
FOSTER KIDS	\$ 692	
SHORT TERM MISSIONS (Bang)	\$ 3,476	
TRAIL LIFE	\$ 646	
YOUTH BUS FUND	\$ 386	
MEN'S BREAKFAST	\$ 171	
YOUTH POP FUND	\$ 479	
TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS	\$ 34,685	
RESERVE CASH AVAILABLE	\$ 151,890	
MONTHS OF EXPENSES IN RESERVE	\$ 2.2	
GENERAL EXPENSES PER MONTH	\$ 69,274	

FINANCIAL REPORTS

E-FREE CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT					
GENERAL FUND	JAN-DEC 2025		JAN-DEC 2024		LAST YEAR
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	OVER/SHORT
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$ 764,407	\$ 831,283	\$ (66,876)	\$ 811,076	\$ 831,283
Con./Building Use	\$ 10,502	\$ 9,500	\$ 1,002	\$ 12,285	\$ 6,500
Interest Income	\$ 7,348	\$ 6,500	\$ 848	\$ 6,813	\$ 4,500
Misc. Income	\$ 374	\$ -	\$ 374	\$ 301	\$ -
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 782,631	\$ 847,283	\$ (64,652)	\$ 830,475	\$ 842,283
EXPENSES	\$ 851,624	\$ 847,283	\$ 4,341	\$ 834,325	\$ 842,283
			\$ -		\$ -
CASH FLOW	\$ (68,993)	\$ -	\$ (68,993)	\$ (3,850)	\$ (3,850)
GENERAL FUND					
CASH BALANCE JAN 1, 2025	\$ 236,639				
CASH BALANCE DEC 30, 2025	\$ 186,575				
INCREASE/DECREASE	\$ (50,064)				

FINANCIAL REPORTS

1:54 PM
01/15/26
Cash Basis

The Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual January through December 2025

	Jan - Dec 25	Budget	\$ Over Budget
Income			
400 Contributions	764,406.78	831,283.00	(66,876.22)
402 Contribution / Building use	10,502.57	9,500.00	1,002.57
450 Interest Income	7,348.20	6,500.00	848.20
475 Miscellaneous Income	374.00		
Total Income	782,631.55	847,283.00	(64,651.45)
Gross Profit	782,631.55	847,283.00	(64,651.45)
Expense			
500 Salaries	406,173.42	432,668.00	(26,494.58)
550 Benefits	45,387.18	62,054.00	(16,666.82)
565 Supply Expense	37,372.05	37,700.00	(327.95)
575 Utilities	37,931.45	41,900.00	(3,968.55)
585 Maintenance	32,155.46	20,500.00	11,655.46
600 Ministries	46,423.45	44,145.00	2,278.45
700 Christian Education	19,354.50	23,810.00	(4,455.50)
750 Global Partners	76,040.00	79,200.00	(3,160.00)
800 Fixed Expense	97,447.13	96,306.00	1,141.13
825 Contingency	53,340.49	9,000.00	44,340.49
Total Expense	851,625.13	847,283.00	4,342.13
Net Income	(68,993.58)	0.00	(68,993.58)