

FIRST FREE CHURCH

Minneapolis

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FIRST WORD

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AUGUST 2014

"God of Wonders...And Jonah" by: Pastor Jay

"And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (-God, Jonah 4.11)

C.S. Lewis once told a story about an old mystical barnacle, who was granted a vision of humanity. He shared with his barnacle followers that humans had no shell; they were not surrounded by water; they were not affixed to a rock. But as time went by, the old mystical barnacle passed away, and his followers began to speculate on the meaning of his vision. They concluded that if humans had no shell, then they must be shapeless. If they were not surrounded by water, then they clearly did not eat. And if they were not fixed to a rock, then they must have no sense of home or place. They concluded that humanity, such as it was, must be far less sophisticated and important than barnacles.

Lewis, in his inimitable style, was reminding us of our limits as we try to imagine and understand God. And if anything, the gap we face makes the difference between humanity and barnacles seem small to the point of insignificance. This story reminds us why we desperately need the Bible—God's self-disclosure, his revelation about himself. Without it, we are like those barnacles contemplating humanity.

I recently preached out of the book of Jonah, a book I love in part because it is a book you can grow into. Jonah is a story loved by children that is at the same time full of profound theology for adults. In particular, Jonah paints a vivid and beautiful picture of God, and it does so in a way that is so casual and approachable that it can almost be easy to miss. In particular, I love the way that Jonah paints a picture of the awesome power and grandeur of God into a story of God's very personal and intimate relationship with Jonah.

The God who calls Jonah, personally and specifically, is also the God who commands the sea, winds, and waves to arrest Jonah's

flight. The God with the authority to command a whale to swallow Jonah, and the power to keep Jonah alive in that whale, is also the God who hears Jonah's prayer of repentance, and shows him mercy. The God with authority over all creation, with the right and power to judge all Nineveh, is the same God who delights to speak to Jonah, and us. He is the God of wonders, and of Jonah.

Never is this incredible picture more vibrant than at the very end of the book. Jonah is sitting on a hill, watching Nineveh, bitter because God has shown them mercy. And God decides to provide Jonah a personal object lesson. He causes a plant to grow and shade Jonah, for which Jonah is grateful. Then God causes it to die, much to Jonah's distress. Gently and patiently, God uses this to teach Jonah by analogy about his care and compassion for all that he has created. The God who commands winds, waves and whales teaches his wayward prophet with all the gentleness and patience of a loving parent.

The picture that Jonah paints—a God of great power and great compassion, is one that we sometimes struggle to comprehend. We cannot comprehend why a God who has the power to declare his glory with the very stars of heaven, would possibly want to know us. And so we need God's word to remind us, to speak the truth we struggle to imagine. We need Jonah to remind us that the God of wonders is the God of Jonah. The God who speaks the universe into being with a word in Genesis 1 is the same God who comes in person and teaches us to call him Daddy (Mt. 6.9).

WEEK IN REVIEW: WEIRD ANIMALS VBC!

Continued from inside...

Check out what some of the crew leaders highlights were:

- "Watching the kids open up to each other and me by the end of the week"
- "Sharing the gospel with the kids who are new to church"
- "Great theme, great crew, great iced coffee. I enjoyed throwing my sins in the garbage bag"
- "Seeing all the kids singing"
- "I love how the storytellers pretend they are the person in the story"
- "One of my kids enjoyed himself so much that he wished he could live at VBC"
- "This week made me appreciate God's truths--the lessons were simple but they really reiterated important truths"
- "(VBC) helped me to feel God's presence again! It showed me what life could be like!"



SEE MORE INFO AT:
www.firstfreechurch.org



Thank you to our fabulous Weird Animals team that worked on putting this together, starting in February:

Vanessa Beckett, Loren Chantland, Mary Chantland, Marilyn Fisher, Erika Garcia, Paulette Goodman, Mike Graff, Katie Klenk, Sherie McClun, Jan Nyholm, Beth Olson, Pam Owen, Priscilla Riveness, Julianna Schuemann, and Kari Taylor!
And, we couldn't have survived without the hard work of Kaitlin Graff and Shelby Anderson!

I continue to hear stories of how this week has impacted both children and adults. God is working powerfully in the lives that were touched at VBC. Children are remembering what they learned and are applying it to their lives. I praise God for this opportunity we have at First Free to touch so many lives for Him!

Beth, the Zookeeper.....(I'm so excited for next year already!)

First Free's Mission – To help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.

UPCOMING @ First Free

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IS TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER

Check out our website!

Visit at www.firstfreechurch.org

Visit our Facebook page!
First Free is now on twitter
@ FEFCMpls

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EXPRESSIONS — AUGUST 4TH, 11TH, & 25TH @ 7:00 P.M.
For those struggling with chronic illnesses or pain, join us at 7:00 P.M. in room 103.

SERVE MINNEAPOLIS — AUGUST 9TH @ 8:00 A.M. — NOON
Join us as we serve at local schools and around our community. Opportunities to serve are available at Community Emergency Services, Hale Elementary, Field Community School, & Minneapolis Parks. Sign ups are available at the Welcome Desk, and more information about serving at each location can be seen on our website at:
www.firstfreechurch.org/serveinneapolis.

Church Family News

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Verna Beckman who celebrated her 90th on July 13th!

CONGRATULATIONS to Darrin & Courtney Hunter on the birth of their newborn daughter, Lauren Adelia Hunter, who was born on July 25th. She's 7 lbs 10 oz and 20.25 inches long! Congratulations Hunter family!

CONGRATULATIONS to Ron & Audrey Sollie who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary! Congrats you two on many more years together!

BAPTISMS: Ryken Kreps, Ben Conrad, Emily Garcia, Paulina Dablaka, & Marie Michele Louis

BENEFIT FOR BEN BYER

Saturday, August 16th
11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Come support Ben &
the Byer Family here at
First Free

CURRENT SERMON SERIES: WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM ME?

- August 3 - Troy Holliday Preaching—Hosea
- August 10 - Righteousness—Zephaniah
- August 17 - Honor—Malachi
- August 24 - Dependence—Zechariah
- August 31 - Pastor Jay Preaching

OUR BEGINNING WITH CHRIST SENT RECOVERY

By: Ryan & Terri LeGros

A few years into our Recovery from addiction to alcohol and drugs it was suggested we get involved in a bible based church. We tried a couple different churches before coming to First Free for the first time. We had listened on line to several sermons from Pastor Joel and loved the wisdom and clarity in his messages. It's hard to believe it has already been 3 years!

After becoming members we noticed there were others in our church family facing similar struggles with addiction. Our recovery support has always come from 12-step meeting outside the church but we began to see a need within our own church. We wanted other people who struggle with alcohol and drugs to know there is a safe place within the church to come and get support. With prayer, the help from our Pastors and others in Recovery we began to form our community group. Our group is designed for confidential sharing because we believe pain shared is pain lessened. We discuss recovery topics and study the Christian 12-steps. We pray, build relationships, and support with each other.

Ryan and I have been through a lot in our journey in recovery, we have learned that being of service to others and sharing our experience, strength and hope will not only help someone else but enhance our own recoveries. We give God all the credit and hope this will become an opportunity to support others who may be facing the same issues.

STUDENTS: SAVE THE DATE!
OCTOBER 17-19
Fall Fling @ Camp Shamineau
More details to come!

Nokomis Farmer's Market

Come and enjoy local grown food in our neighborhood on August 27th from 4:00-8:00 p.m.
Located just across the street from First Free at the corner of 52nd Street & Chicago Avenue.

A WEEK IN REVIEW...WEIRD ANIMALS VBC!

HERE'S A TASTE OF HOW GOD WORKED AT THIS YEAR'S VBC!

- 300 girls and boys came to VBC!
- Our missions focus was partnering with FEFC and World Vision to provide access to clean water for individuals in Africa. \$1500 was raised for "Clean Water for Kids" and that means 30 kids will have access to clean water for life because of dollars that were given! It was crazy to watch the dollars come in each day and see the excitement of the children when they gave. So sweet!
- 170 volunteers made the week go smoothly! Praise the Lord for them!
- Jack Nordin, First Free's "Weird Animals Magician" stunned a huge audience on Wednesday!
- 24 preschoolers attended "Ozzy's Preschool Park" & over 20 "Zoobies" adorned the nursery!
- Mike Graff, Julianna Schuemann, and Andrew Holliday rocked it as the "upfront" roles of MC and skit performers!
- At least 15 decisions for Christ were made!
- Some volunteers took a day or more off of work to be at VBC!

Here are quotes from a few parents:

"Such a joy to see all the 'cool' youth interacting positively with kids"

"Our kids have loved singing the songs around home"

"She (her daughter) started recognizing all of God's blessings this week--weather, animals, good/bad feelings--no matter what, Jesus loves us"

"The kids said this year was fun and focused on getting closer to God"

MORE ON THE WEEK IN REVIEW ON THE BACK PAGE...

