



the Evangel
fefc

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the Evangel

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The Evangel is the newsletter of First Evangelical Free Church (FEFC) of McKeesport, sent free of charge to the church's community. The Evangel welcomes articles, stories, or other submissions. If you wish to be added to the mailing list, contact the church office at (412) 678-6655.

FEFC exists to guide people to becoming healthy followers of Jesus Christ.

A Different View

Pastor Kirk Albrecht

We have recently welcomed a new member to our team at First Free – our new Communications Specialist, Amanda Troncone. Amanda is a fresh graduate of Waynesburg University, and brings energy, vision, and some great skills to help move us forward in communicating who we are as a church and what we are doing. We believe she will further aid us in fulfilling our mission of helping people become healthy followers of Jesus Christ.

How will she do that? By presenting our image in clear, cohesive, and coherent ways. You may wonder why that is important. There are several reasons. One, we want to make sure how we present ourselves is clear. When messages are confusing, people aren't sure what to believe, or how to respond. So we want every communication platform we have to clearly paint the picture of who we are.

Second, image is important. If our image is muddled or confusing or just dull, many people we could bless might not give us a second chance. A clear image is like an open door to see inside. By having a gateway that is compelling, people will check us out, they will understand us better, and then we can begin building into their lives through effective Gospel-centered ministry.

And last, life is changing. What might have been a good way to communicate a decade ago may no longer be effective. As a church committed to the essentials of the Gospel of Jesus, we will never stray from that core. Yet how we communicate that will need to keep changing in ways that are clear, understandable, compelling, and motivating.

Let us move forward as a church to do all we can to let people know how great is our God and how amazing is our Savior Jesus!

Creative Arts Ministry

Nancy Jo Demolin



**The heavens declare
the glory of God,
and the sky above
proclaims his
handiwork.
Psalm 19:1**

“If the stars were made to worship so will I
If the mountains bow in rev'rence so will I
If the oceans roar Your greatness so will I
For if ev'rything exists to lift You high so will I
If the wind goes where You send it so will I
If the rocks cry out in silence so will I
If the sum of all our praises still falls shy
Then we'll sing again a hundred billion times”

This song lyric belongs to the bridge of “So Will I”, a worship song produced by Hillsong United.

It is a song about God as an artist working his masterpiece, a work of art called love. And it began with creation and it goes through the whole story where it was finished at the cross. And now it continues to be rebirthed and restored in and through us here and now. The whole picture is response. “If the stars were made to worship so will I. You know if creation bows before You so will I. If it all exists to praise You so will I.” And the more the writers thought about it there was just endless metaphors and pictures and things that came back to this response. And maybe nothing better than “if You laid Your life down, if you gladly chose surrender so will I. And if You left the grave behind You so will I. That’s the entire story of why we’re here and our purpose and what it means to follow Jesus and live for Him.

If you get a chance, give this unique lyric a listen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyYn21RdBBO>

Pastor's Pen



Pastor Kirk Albrecht

A favorite hymn of a past generation of Bible-believing Christians is "*In the Garden*," and it has brought comfort and encouragement to many believers. Yet perhaps unwittingly, this beloved song promotes a key Christian myth, one that many American Christians hold.

The song begins ...

I come to the Garden alone.

First red flag. I know that the image is meant to hearken us back to Eden, and perhaps even to Gethsemane, where Adam, and then Jesus, were alone in the Garden. Or at least by themselves.

There are countless Christians who talk about "*Jesus and me*" as if there were no one else in the world. This is an off-shoot of a misunderstanding of Biblical truth, and has significant consequences for how we live our Christian lives.

There are several reasons why we must not allow ourselves to define our Christian lives as "Jesus and me" —

Where is the body? When we reduce our Christian experience to just me and my Lord, we have lost sight of the great truth of becoming a part of God's family when we come to faith in Jesus.

We never come to the Garden alone.

Every believer enjoys a personal relationship with Jesus, and we all have different experiences as we walk with him. I won't try to tell you to have a Christian experience like mine, because you are different from me.

But we dare not limit our experience to that single relationship. No matter how isolated we may choose to live, God has placed us in his body, in connection and relationship with other believers - all kinds of believers.

This is a strong temptation in our American, individualistic culture, to make everything personal—our freedoms, our right to marry whom we choose, and of course, our choice of faith, and that special bond we have with our Savior.

But we are born again into an already existing family, the Church. We carry in our lives the imprint of parents, grandparents, friends, enemies. In a very real sense, it is never just me and Jesus. He may be primary, but he is not just for me.

The song ends with another element of this myth —

And the joy we share as we tarry there

None other has ever known.

Hmm. This is either hopelessly naïve, or just plain proud. No one has ever known the joy you have in your relationship with

Jesus? How then could he promise all his disciples, "*I have told you this that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.*" (John 15:11)

We are special to God, and we share a special bond with our Savior. As we live according to his truths, we will experience greater levels of intimacy with him. Yet we should not think that no other Christians — of any time, place, or culture — haven't also enjoyed the intimacy of life with Jesus.

So this myth makes us believe we are more "in" with Jesus than others. This was the heresy of the Gnostics in the early days of the church, claiming that only through special knowledge were Christians truly born again — and they had it, and most didn't. It is the sin of **exclusivity**.

This myth can lead to all kinds of problems in our Christian lives, and in the church. It leads us away from a healthy accountability, believing that whatever Jesus tells me in the special place is always right and good. In the absence of godly counsel, this inner guidance often leads astray. Sometimes, people who reflect a strong individual link with Jesus shy away from commitment in the body, and listening to others, because they are convinced no one really understands the depth of their relationship.

It also takes away the unique role and power of the broader body of Christ, the Church. We are meant for each other. We are meant to share this new life in all its

richness and beauty, in all its power and grace. It is not just for "me" - it is for each of us, and for all of us, together.

We need to come to the garden sometimes, by ourselves. We need to be focused in our pursuit of what God wants us to hear. We need that special time, when we invite him in to do his work. But as we come, we need to know that friends from our church, and believers around the world, are entering into that same special place. We go there together, as one body, with one Lord, Jesus — Lord of all. And we are never there alone.

Pastor Kirk

Children & Family Ministry

Joel Rishel

On the last Sunday of 2018, we did something different. We had a Family Sunday.

Family Sunday is when the all the school age children are with their parents for the 10:45 service. We still had the Nursery and Preschool classes, but all the rest of the kids in Kindergarten on up were in the adult service. For that Sunday we incorporated kids into as much of the service as possible—we had families greeting at the doors, teens were participating in the band, kids helped collect the offering, we had a Child Dedication, and an 8 year-old did the Scripture reading.

I'll admit, I was a little nervous about how it would go. You just never know when a six year-old is going to start talking out loud. Or parents might get mad at me because they have to make sure all their wiggly kiddos sit still for an hour.

I'm sure there was some of that, but the feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive. So we are planning to do this whenever there is a 5th Sunday in a month, as well as on Easter Sunday. But I'd like to invite the whole church family into this process so that everyone understands what we're doing and why.

First of all, it gives families a chance to worship together.

Second, it helps prepare children for the adult worship experience.

Third, it gives some of our teachers and volunteers a break.

So when we do it again and the family behind you is struggling to keep order, please don't turn around and glare at them. Instead, pray for them and look for ways you can help out and encourage them. Let's think of this as a family venture. Remember, we are training kids for the future, and parents need all the prayers and help we can offer.

Here are the planned Family Sundays for 2019: March 31, April 21 (Easter Sunday), June 30, Sept 29, and Dec 29. If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Cheering for all the parents,
Joel Rishel
Pastor of Children & Family
Ministries

Deaf Ministry

Rich Wilson

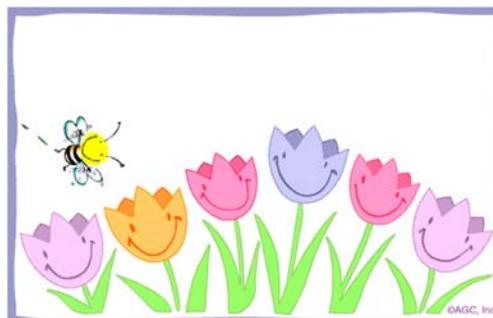


The Deaf Ministry Wants You to Know

American Sign Language (ASL) classes will start soon at CCAC. Classes at South Campus begin on February 18th from 6:30-9:00. Classes at Allegheny Campus will start March 5th, 6:30-9:00. Please refer to CCAC Non-Credit course catalog to register. Classes will be taught by Rich Wilson.

Sign-A-Thon will once again be held at the Mall at Robinson. It will be on March 9th, and will be from 12:00-4:00 pm. Our church will be having a table with literature to be passed out to the attendees. This is a great opportunity for the church to reach out to the Deaf community. We will be displaying the church banner, and hopefully we will be in a good location for all to see. Please pray for this event, and try and come out and see what we are doing. If you have literature sitting around you would like to donate to the cause, please let Rich Wilson know or place in his mailbox. This event has a draw with over 300 Deaf in attendance.

Imagine a four-hour class in spelling. Interpreters are required to attend twenty hours of training a year. This training is to develop skills and keep up with the profession. The four hour class in spelling was not the interpreter spelling, but learning practical ways to read spelling when a Deaf person spells a word back. Deaf people use a lot of spelling. We were taught how to decode the letters that are spelled, even if the word is misspelled. It was an awesome class.



Global Ministry

Pastor Kirk Albrecht

HENOC & GUERLINE LUCIEN

CAP HAITIEN, HAITI

Haiti's economy is struggling. Food continues to get more expensive and diesel prices are astronomical. There have been protests in several cities recently calling for the resignation of Haiti's President. There is much unrest among the people.

Henoc's Toyota Hilux diesel truck needs replacing and is way beyond its useful life. More repairs have been made-pray the vehicle runs for a good long time until we can find the resources to replace it. Until we raise funds for a new vehicle, is there a diesel truck someone could donate and pay to ship to Haiti?

Henoc's boys are in the states with their mother so that they can attend an American school. The family's separation adds stress to everyone involved.

Pray for Henoc, Patrick, the VOHM board, and the pastors and teachers that work alongside Henoc in the ministry in Haiti. Pray that Haitians will continue to commit their lives to Christ.

Pray that more donors will step forward to sponsor students at the school and continue to cover our operating costs.



JORDAN & STEPHANIE RYDER

ETHNOS360

We are currently sitting at 54% of our needed, monthly support. I have cut back on doing side jobs in order to put more time into doing Ministry Partnership Development so that the reality of us going in July doesn't begin to get overshadowed by the large financial goals we need to reach. God has been providing and we are confident He will continue. We also believe that He wants us to work hard, wherever we are and in whatever we are doing; so we will! Thankfully we have had several meetings with different local church leaders, but as it turns out, most mission budgets are flat lined. We will keep working!

We need to be at **75%** before we can purchase plane tickets for Papua New Guinea. **Our goal is to reach that level by April.** While those tickets are a huge purchase, we have to look at it as a secondary issue in some ways. The priority is to continue working towards and praying towards an increase in our overall percentage. Then we can think about those tickets!

Prayer Needs:

For Steph: pray for steadfastness and patience as she continues to carry the bulk of responsibilities in the home and with paperwork.

For Jordan: more opportunities to meet with individuals and/or church leaders. We would love to spread the word about the needs in Papua New Guinea and how others can join our team. Also, he has been having some trouble in his left eye. His vision has been slightly off and darkened. He is seeing a retina specialist next month to get some more answers, but please be praying for God's provision in that!

For the boys: Canaan is our sick one. He gets sick at least 3x as much as his brothers. He is currently battling a fever and cold-like symptoms. Pray for his little body as he fights this latest bout of illness. The other two boys are doing great and staying healthy! We're grateful for that!

Senior Achievers

Gerry Nelson, Secretary

Recently, we have had inquiries to the function of Senior Achievers as part of First Evangelical Free Church. One individual wasn't fully aware of our overall functions, and upon becoming aware, suggested that we make it known to our church family.

Senior Achievers has been in existence for many, many years and has had excellent leadership in the past and present years. We are a group that in many churches is not recognized. I am, however, gratified that our church, First Evangelical Free Church, has recognized the need for a Christian senior group. The church also recognizes that we were and are an asset since in the past, many of our group held offices, helped financially in the building or our present church building, and worked with children in various venues, etc.

- We have meetings eight times a year. This provides fellowship with our fellow seniors. We have a devotional speaker, a meal and a program.
- Our Committee consists of approximately 20 people, and at the beginning of the year we plan the devotional speakers, the program and meals. We have a dedicated Committee who is willing to work to make our meetings successful.
- Every month of the year, we send \$100.00 to one of our young missionaries. We hope to raise that amount in the near future.
- Every year we have a fun meeting that we call White Elephant, and the proceeds from that meeting go to the Children's Summer Program.
- We have a visitation committee and our shut-ins are visited and the seniors send cards. This past Christmas time, we had a blitz of the group sending cards to the shut-ins. We were told that one of the shut-ins felt so blessed because they were remembered.
- Every year we have a meeting devoted to showing our appreciation to our Pastors and staff.
- Pastor Kirk gives us an update on our missionaries at each meeting. If a missionary is visiting our church, we have a meeting devoted to them.
- Most of the members of the White Cross Missionary group come from our Senior Achievers.
- The funeral committee consists mostly of our Senior Achievers.
- Weekly bulletins and other materials are put in

mailboxes; there again these folks are our Senior group.

- The Wedding Committee is made up of our Seniors.
- Various seniors help in serving and clean-up of functions such as the teen Mother & Daughter Tea and also the Date Night event.
- We open our meetings to folks of the community to fellowship with Christians. This is in line with our church values.
- We, as individuals, contribute to the church financially, pray for the church, and participate in anything that the church has.
- We have trips for our group. Most of our seniors would not be able to go places if it were not for our trips. Age for many seniors will not allow them to drive to destinations, some families live away and some families' work schedules make it difficult to take their parents on a trip. Our Trip Committee receives so many notes from our folks that thank us for having our trips. They say that without our trips, they wouldn't go anywhere. We are humbled by these thank you notes and know even though it is a lot of work to plan and execute, these trips are worth it.

We have many wonderful times together at our luncheons. To see the joy upon meeting and spending time with each other when they come together is a special feeling in itself. This is their opportunity to be involved with others and to share these special moments.

At all times, we keep Christ as the head of all we do.

OUR MOTTOO IS SENIORS HELPING SENIORS, SO OUR MISSION AND MINISTRY IS NOT ONLY THE CHURCH, BUT IT IS TO SERVE THE SENIORS IN OUR CHURCH. We are not a forgotten group at First Evangelical Free Church. Thank you, First Free, for your support!

We use this opportunity to let others know what Senior Achievers is truly all about. If you have any questions, please direct them to Dan Sites, Chairman, or Gerry Nelson, Secretary.

We would encourage anyone over the age of 50 to be a part of our great group of Christian Seniors.

Student Ministry

Alex Ielase

Student Ministries offer a great time to impact people as they make many transitions in life. Middle schoolers entering adolescence. Teens beginning to really think for themselves and gaining responsibility. Young adults starting life on their own for the first time. It is a privilege to be placed in the middle of all that and speak the Truth of God's Word.

At Reach during the month of December, we finished our series on "Following Jesus" and tried to then live it out with two weeks of serving. On December 12th, students used their own money to buy presents for kids from our community. We descended upon area stores in our small groups, bought the gifts, then returned to the church and wrapped them.

On December 19th, we again divided up into small groups and visited widows and widowers who have lost a loved one within the past year. We delivered a meal cooked by some of our church family and sang Christmas songs of hope together. We ended each visit with prayer. Every person shared their gratitude, with one widower saying through tears, "This has made my Christmas!" Students were tangibly moved by this experience of sharing the love and compassion of Jesus. For some, this was out of their comfort zones, but they did well even when it was hard.

During the month of January, we began a new series entitled "Come and See, Go and Tell." We want our students to know Jesus and also know how to SHARE HIM WITH OTHERS!

We've looked so far at how the first disciples were impacted by Christ and their immediate obedience to follow Him and then tell others. Key passages for us have been John 1:29-51, Luke 2:8-20, and Matthew 4:18-22. Feel free to look up these verses in the Bible and read them with your students. Pray that God would light a fire in their hearts to "come and see" who Christ is and what He's done, and then "go and tell" that Good News to others! As we moved into February, we visited Riverside Nursing home as a large group. We pray that we brought joy to the residents there through preaching and singing. Additionally, the residents at Riverside were a blessing to US as we spent time together.

At Alive (18-25 year olds), we have been reading through the Book of Romans. It is a powerful reminder of the grace of God displayed in the Gospel: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

In January, we took six students to the Cross Conference in Louisville, KY. We heard many great messages about God's heart for the nations. We were challenged to go and send others to the unreached peoples of the Earth. Alive gathers every Tuesday night, sharing a meal together and spending time in the Word.

Thank you for your prayers and for your partnership in seeing students and young adults come to know Christ and grow in Him.

Sonshine Community Ministries

Terry Ruccio

SONSHINE CALENDAR UPDATE

April 16 - Chick Fil A Spirit Night - 5-8pm - Waterfront location
(come eat with us and in turn raise money for Sonshine)

May 4/5 - Pittsburgh Marathon - be a runner or donate
(www.crowdrise.com/sonshinecommunityministries)

May 18 - Camp Carwash @ Synergy
(to raise scholarships for Pine Valley Camp)

June 23-28 - KidZone Camp @ Pine Valley Camp - ages 8-12



SONSHINE PRAYER ITEMS

Hang 5 - We are wrapping up our year at the end of March

Camp Signups - Begin in March. Pray for more kids to participate
and for sponsors

Mom-Mom Spring & Summer meetings begin in March - one time
a month

Families with housing needs

Addictions and recovery

Give me a call or email me if you are interested
in getting involved in serving!

412.672.6711 / terry@sonshinecm.org

Family News

Celebrating New Lives!

Congratulations ...

To Tim & Abby Fawcett on the birth of a daughter, Lucy Elizabeth, December 1, 2018. Lucy joins big brothers, Micah, Colin & Elliot. Proud grandparents are Bill & Linda Fawcett. Marilyn Fawcett is the proud great grandmother.

To Mark & Sarah Gillingham on the birth of a son, Colt Brave, December 12, 2018. Grandparents are Bill & Timberly Painter. Great grandparents are Dane & Faye Lloyd.

To Marilyn Fawcett on the birth of her 22nd great grandchild, Miles Everett, January 1, 2019. Parents are Christopher & Jaclyn Bartko.

To Andy & Cathy Jinks on the birth of a grandson, Simon Elliott, January 16, 2019. Parents are Brian & Melissa Jinks. Simon joins big brothers, Oliver & Henry.

To Ryan & Julie Atherton on the birth of a daughter, Hailey Jean, February 5. Hailey joins big sister, Lyra.



Passings

Our Christian love and sympathy is extended to ...

Darlene Caldwell & family at the passing of her brother, Ronald Rodgers

Steve & Audrey Nagy at the passing of Steve's brother, Robert Nagy

Ernie & Meri Segady & family at the passing of Ernie's father, Ernest Segady, Sr.

Bill & Carol Barnes & family at the passing of Bill's brother, David Barnes

Mark & Valerie Bradley at the passing of Valerie's brother, Robert Russin

The family & friends of Betty Bour at her passing

The family & friends of Rita Hanna at her passing

Mary Ellen Ference & Michelle Martin & family at the passing of sister & aunt, Levitt Haas

Memorial Gifts

David Barnes

John & Linda Gougler

Frances Berarducci

Wayne & Gerry Nelson

Paul Bezeck

Dave & Barb Badstibner
Dorothy Dubyak

Betty Bour

John & Linda Gougler
William & Anne Jones

Bill Guy

Dave & Barb Badstibner

Taylor Nestor

Ellen Firda

Ed Pavuk

Bill & Dolly Halas

Ronald Rodgers

John & Linda Gougler
Wayne & Gerry Nelson
Hal & Rhoda West



March 1	9:30 am	Moms Connect
March 1-3		Student Ministry Winter Retreat
March 11	8:00 pm	Trustee Board Meeting
March 12	11:00 am	Senior Achiever Meeting
March 15	9:30 am	Moms Connect
March 21	9:00 am	White Cross
March 23	9:00 am	Church Cleaning Day
March 29	7:00 pm	Couples' Date Night
April 5	9:30 am	Moms Connect
April 6	9:00 am	1st Responders' Breakfast
April 8	7:00 pm	Trustee Board Meeting
April 9	11:00 am	Senior Achiever Meeting
April 18	9:00 am	White Cross
April 19	9:30 am	Moms Connect
April 19	7:00 pm	Good Friday Service
April 21	10:45 am	Easter Sunday (No ABFs)
April 28	12:30 pm	General Assembly Meeting
May 3-5		Men's Retreat
May 12		Mother's Day
May 14	11:00 am	Senior Achiever Meeting
May 16	9:00 am	White Cross
May 27		Memorial Day (Office Closed)



in justice to begin...a planar in girono

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