



† Arthur Evangelical Free Church †

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Greetings Everyone!

It's hard to believe that at this time last year the search committee and Melissa and I had just begun to have a conversation about the position here in Arthur and then it was in October of last year that we came for a couple of visits. The first visit was of course was informal and then the second was a formal candidate visit and interview. Then of course we arrived here in January and that means we've been here for just about 8 months now – isn't that hard to believe!

Anyway, I thought I'd share a quick note with all of you and few thoughts now that we've been here for a little while. We want you to know that we have come to deeply love this church family (that's all of you) – we have a very special church family! We're also enjoying experiencing the new to us rhythm of life here in Western Iowa. Over the past months I've enjoyed seeing how our church functions in many different capacities and observing our different ministries and this is by no means a comprehensive list but I have come to deeply appreciate:

1. Our commitment to the Bible, our church hungers for God's Word.
2. The way we consistently pray for one another, there is no deeper expression of genuine love and concern than to labor in prayer for one-another.
3. Our commitment to supporting global missions. Okay, my head was spinning to just trying to figure out who all of our supported missionaries are – this list is a long one. That said, our heart to see the Gospel proclaimed all over the world and among every people group is truly thrilling.
4. Our commitment to making disciples of the next generation through ministries like AWANA, our Wednesday youth groups, Sunday School, and VBS. Our heart for kids is special – it's such a privilege and also a sacred responsibility to make disciples of so many children and youth who call our greater community home.

I could go on and on but I'll stop there so I have time and space to share a few other things. I want everyone to know that I'm excited to see what God does in the weeks, months, and years to come as we seek together to reach our community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Building the foundation of a wonderful 130+ year legacy, I'm excited to see what God will do in our midst as a church family as we seek to reach out to our community with the live-giving, life sustaining message of the Gospel.

In Matthew 16:18 (ESV), Jesus says – *I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* We must always remember that the Church is Jesus' Church and He builds it. And on top of that that He promises that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. And with that in mind – I to have one quick item of business that I want to provide an update about. As you know our church is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) and in June, Allen Tunberg and I had the privilege of attending EFCA One (the semi-annual conference of the EFCA).

The conference was a wonderful and encouraging time and both of us deeply enjoyed reconnecting with friends and leaders from around our movement who we've known for many years and we also enjoyed introducing each other to different people that each of us have known for a long time. The theme of the conference was 'disciplemaking' and connected with that theme there were a number of great messages and quality deeper learning opportunities on wide variety of topics. We also enjoyed lifting our voices in praise during special times of passionate worship through music.

On June 19, 2019 the conference business meeting was held and delegates voted on a number of business matters. The most significant was a historic vote concluding a multi-year (arguably multi-decade) conversation within the EFCA family about eschatology (that's the study of the end times). The conference voted (79% affirmative) to change one word in the EFCA Statement of Faith exchanging the 'premillennial' with the very Biblical word 'glorious'. This means that article 9 of the Statement of Faith now reads:

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

If you have questions about this change or about the process I'd be happy to discuss it individually, in smaller groups, with Sunday School classes, etc. But for now I want to assure everyone that this process that wasn't entered into lightly, it was carefully and prayerfully considered (and debated) over a period of years. I'd also personally suggest that this is a good change because it is consistent with our Free Church culture and value of: 'in essentials unity, in non-essentials charity'. Some refer to this as: 'majoring on the majors and minoring on the minors'. It has never been the ethos of the Free Church to divide over a non-essential matter; we will willing discuss and debate such secondary matters but we don't divide over them. I'd also suggest that this decision will serve to strengthen our Statement of Faith because Jesus' return will be glorious – it's described that way in the Bible repeatedly. And having only Gospel-essential matters contained within our Statement of Faith ultimately makes the statement stronger and easier to defend.

In the coming months and years we will want to have a discussion about updating our individual local church Statement of Faith to that of the EFCA. Making that one word change is encouraged though not required of EFCA member churches. For now I wanted to make you aware and allow there to be plenty of time for questions, discussion and consideration.

We have the privilege of being part of a great local church family here in Arthur, IA that's part of a deeply Gospel-centered movement, the Evangelical Free Church of America. To God be the glory!

Soli Deo Gloria
(that's Glory to God Alone)

Pastor Dave