

There is much to praise our God for!



News- letter

Spring 2026

Meet our new Youth Outreach Coordinator, read about God's **big** impact through a *small* yes, & worship with us this season.



Introducing Our New(ish) FEC Team Member!

Emmalise Emsweller

As of January 2025, Emmalise officially became our Youth Outreach Coordinator! Although this is a new official role for her, she has already been such a joy and support to our community since she arrived in Chicago in 2022 as an Envision Intern. She has spent the last 2 years working with youth in Albany Park and is now excited to be a part of the FEC youth group in Rogers Park. Emmalise also serves on the Sunday Tech and Sunday School teams. She loves watching kids get excited about the Lord and taking ownership in their faith. After the Lord, Emmalise's favorite subject to talk about is all things nerdy, from Lord of the Rings to Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)!

Join us in praising our God for...

- The opportunity to share the true Easter story with our After School Program children and to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus with them!
- The furniture donation/provision for our front lobby!
- God's continued daily provision!



Please pray with us for...

• After School Program

- One of our 15-year-old youths who lives with both parents who struggle with addiction, and she shares how this affects her emotionally and mentally
- The bullying situation in schools which has increased, and the kids have started to share more about
- One of our 9-year-old boys who shares how difficult it is to live in a single parent home where he is required to care for his younger sibling
- A teenager who has been asked to start counseling at her school after a teacher saw the cuts on her wrist last month
- Financial resources in order to invest in our kids in different ways (taking them out to eat, to watch a movie, to watch a play, etc., on days off of school and weekends)

• Community Mornings

- Continued healthy partnerships with agencies with addiction, mental health and housing services
- Increased understanding of the Gospel and the Kingdom as it is proclaimed

• Redemption Church

- Development of Elders and future leaders
- Increased hearts for prayer and a desire for spiritual maturing

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
- Colossians 4:2

From The Front Desk

By: Shayla Sotelo Manke

Executive Admin Assistant & Communications Coordinator

I look both ways as I walk past the newest run over crosswalk sign in the middle of the street. Devon and Bosworth. I had never memorized an intersection so well as I know this one now. Usually, I am grateful to see one of our large wooden doors cracked a bit open so that I do not have to struggle with my keys and the sticky lock. A cracked open door also means people. And people inside the center means Jesus is inside the center.

Currently, on a Tuesday at 10 am, the people are men and women who come for breakfast and showers during Community Mornings. I usually catch some of them as they grab one last bite to go and say goodbye. I set my bags down and begin to sort through all the mail, documents, and miscellaneous items that get placed on my desk.

The front desk. In my role as the Front Desk Keeper (aka the Administrative Assistant & Communications Coordinator), I do not get to spend much time with those we serve. I have the privilege of sometimes being the first to say hello when people come in and the last to say goodbye when they leave. Still, I do not get to experience the pain, growth, and healing of our neighbors firsthand the same way the rest of the staff does. This is not an "out in the field" type of role.

After being here for almost 3 years, however, I know that this does not make my position at the center any more passive. There is no shortage of stories to tell and work to be done. I witness much. I feel plenty. I am challenged often. I testify of God's movement.

Even there from the front desk, I cannot ignore the not so quiet whispers to, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." (Romans 12:12) I hear this in the squeals of laughter from children who just 2 years ago traveled thousands of dangerous miles to an unknown country with their frightened families.

I hear this in the loud banging on the door from a homeless man who spent the 15 degree night sleeping in a tent outside and now leaves our doorstep with gratitude and a bag full of bagels.

I hear this in the blaring sirens of the ambulance that pierce my ears every hour reminding me that this city neighborhood is far too familiar with illness and pain.

I hear the whispers in the blend of bare tears and bright cackles of my colleagues who deeply long for personal healing as they continually cling to truth they know well.

Work here is not peaceful and quiet. It is not cushy and carefree. It is real and raw and resonant.

Even here from the front desk, I cannot ignore Jesus working. He never clocks out, and He speaks to all who sit in this center long enough, no matter where they are in the building.





Community Member Highlight

Brenda Kulowiya



"Through FEC, God has been good, just as this song describes."

God Moves: How a Small Yes and a Small Place Can Make a Big Impact

About 24 years ago, my former Sunday school teacher told me about a young couple, Scott & Natalie Manke, desiring to open an urban ministry, and she thought it would be a great opportunity for me to join them. I was a single mom at the time, and I had just relocated from Florida after being away from Chicago since I was 15 years of age. I did not want to join the ministry, so I tried not to think about it.

However, God moves in mysterious ways. My son was invited to a playdate with the Manke kids, so they could connect and we could all have dinner together. After dinner, Scott and Natalie shared their vision for the urban ministry and how God was leading them to bring the gospel, The Good News, to Rogers Park. They said they needed a team of prayer warriors, and I immediately said, "Oh, I love to pray and God has answered most of the prayers that I have prayed!" With that, they asked if I could partner with them to do prayer walks. I said "yes!"

Brenda has been a part of the Redemption Church and Family Empowerment Centers community for over two decades. She shares a short testimony of how God has used this part of her life to move in her and through her alongside others.

I am glad I have stuck it out all these years with God on my side. My son was able to grow up going to the center's wonderful programs, such as the After School Program, summer camps, etc. I have also stepped up to volunteer wherever my help was needed. I have had the opportunity to share the gospel openly with many kids and to shine God's light and love on them! It has been a blessing to be a part of a ministry that values and believes in prayer and serving the needy and the broken. My life has been richly impacted by this small non-profit/church and all its unique ways to love others and connect with them: Awana classes, small groups, food and clothing pantries, mission groups, leadership development programs (Greenhouse Residency), first responder site for migrants (during the migrant crisis in Chicago), Sunday school classes, Thanksgiving basket giveaways, and much more.

I thank God for the church. I appreciate all the people who serve and give of themselves to serve God's people! If we have a desire to serve and be on a mission, God will open up an opportunity to glorify Him and bring glory to His name!

What's On Our Spring Worship Playlist?

You Have Been Good

Twila Paris

Oh Lord, You have been good
You have been faithful to all generations
Oh Lord, Your steadfast love
And tender mercy have been our salvation

For by Your hand we have been fed
And by Your Spirit we have been led
Oh Lord

For by Your hand we have been fed
And by Your Spirit we have been led

Oh Lord, Almighty God
Father Unchanging, Upright and Holy
Oh Lord, You have been good
You have been good
You have been faithful, You have been good



Scan to listen & add this to your
spring worship playlist!

Amongst the Tombs

By: Natalie Manke

Crisis Outreach Coordinator

All through the Scriptures God is giving us an opportunity to know Him...to know His heart. Our community has recently been working through the book of Mark, and we are continually reminded of God's character as we get to know Him through the living testimony of Jesus, His Son.

In Mark 5, there is a story of Jesus traveling to a different region where a Gentile man is suffering internal torment by a demonic presence so terrible that he cannot be in the presence of others. This man is left to roam amongst tombs and cry out day and night. Nothing can contain him...not even chains. When Jesus arrives, the demonic presence immediately recognizes who Jesus is and the authority he has, and they are terrified. Jesus, the Holy One, is there, and he is there for the broken, tormented man. A lot can be pulled out of this story of encounter with Jesus. I find it most aw-striking, however, that Jesus does not only heal and deliver, but that he goes out of his way to show mercy. Oh, how this man needed to experience the mercy of God, and God himself, in the person of Jesus. He comes for this helpless, harassed, and lost man, and this man is forever changed. He is set free! Hallelujah to the God who would travel in a boat to find a tormented man amongst tombs. Hallelujah to the same God who laid upon the cross for the sins of humanity. What mercy, what grace, what lavished love is given to us through Christ!

Sometimes in our day to day, I am aware that those amongst us are struggling with addiction and mental health challenges and feel the deep aloneness and internal suffering much like the man in the tombs. A sense of being "lost" and "beyond hope or change." As I contemplate Jesus, Our Healer, I am aware that He is very much with us in our "amongst the tombs" experiences, as He is present in any other type of suffering. Jesus went to the man. In our ministry, we get to be with the hurting and the lost. I don't always know exactly what Jesus is doing. I get glimpses here and there of His redemptive work, and I know that I am called to stay alert to His voice so that I might participate fully in all that He wants to accomplish. Jesus knows His plans for each of His creations, He knows how to speak to them, to draw them, to transform them.

Please pray with us as we teach from His word and tell His story, make His name known, act as His hands and feet, and share cups of cold water. Pray with us as we ourselves continue to learn from the One who knows our hearts, and His plans for our futures. Pray we are faithful with this calling to love, serve, and proclaim. Rejoice with us for His amazing grace and mercy that has been poured out so that we can celebrate that not only does he go to those amongst tombs but that He Himself rose from THE TOMB and lives!



Another **playlist addition!**



Mighty One

Maverick City Music

**Yes, mighty One
Mighty One
We worship You
Yes, mighty One
Mighty One
We worship You**

**For I've tasted and seen Your goodness
And I've stood in the power of Your presence
For I've felt the depths of Your mercy
And oh, how Your love, it always surrounds me**

**Oh, mighty One (You are, You are)
Mighty One (Yes)
We worship You (Strong and mighty One)
Mighty One (Yeah)
Mighty One
We worship You**

**For I've tasted and seen Your goodness
And I've stood in the power of Your presence
For I've felt the depths of Your mercy
And oh, how Your love, it always surrounds me
(For I've) For I've tasted and seen Your goodness
And I've stood in the power of Your presence
(And I've felt) For I've felt the depths of Your mercy
And oh, how Your love, it always surrounds me**

**You alone
Are worthy of
The highest praise
And all my love
For You alone
Are worthy of
The highest praise
And all my love**



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continue to care for
those in need in our city!



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