

BEFREE CHURCH

Church Profile



Who We Are

Branford Evangelical Free Church (BE Free Church) is a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) and is located on the shore of Long Island Sound, in Branford, Connecticut. We are Elder-led, theologically conservative, and value Bible-based preaching. As a church family we prioritize supportive relationships, generosity of time and resources, and fellowship with one another. Our attendees often say that BE Free “feels like home,” a sentiment that reflects our roots as a home Bible study. Since our founding, BE Free has employed four Senior Pastors. We have been blessed with a lineage of faithful leaders who knit themselves fully into the church and community and served long tenures. We currently seek a Senior Pastor who will join our church family and bring new energy to lead us faithfully into future ministry and growth.

Mission

BE Free Church exists to present Christ as Savior and pursue Him as Lord.

Vision

We seek to intentionally follow Jesus and grow together in our understanding of God's Word to better love God and people. As the Holy Spirit brings life change, and as we are equipped to serve, He enables us to reach the Shoreline and beyond in innovative ways that point others to the life-changing message of the Gospel.



Values

We love God and people

We are Word-driven

We are Holy Spirit-dependent

We seek courage to innovate

We strive for intentional discipleship

History

BE Free Church began as a home Bible study in 1956, led originally by Pastor Herb Gale and later Pastor Paul Engle. In 1977, following Pastor Engle's departure to pursue his PhD, Pastor Walter Westerholm was hired as Senior Pastor.

Pastor Westerholm was a prayerful and relational leader with a passion for discipleship and outreach. Under his leadership, BE Free grew both spiritually and numerically. In 1986, BE Free moved to its current building, the construction of which was largely completed by church members. During this season, BE Free continued to grow, had strong discipleship pathways, and raised up and sent missionaries into the field.

JESUS CHRIST

THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

1986

History

Pastor Steve Chamberlain initially served as Assistant Pastor under Pastor Westerholm. In 1998, he was called to the role of Senior Pastor and remained in that role until his retirement in October of 2022. Pastor Chamberlain continued Pastor Westerholm's legacy of Bible-based preaching and it was under their combined leadership that BE Free planted a sister church in nearby Madison. Pastor Chamberlain and his wife, Lois, were strong and relational leaders, who had attended and served in many capacities since 1979. We are thankful for their many years of faithfulness.

BE Free Now

As with most churches, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced unique challenges. At BE Free we saw contention surrounding COVID policies but we also saw a depth of love and commitment that held the church together in spite of the difficulties and disagreements. Following the pandemic, we have faced significant changes.

In the summer of 2022 our Senior Pastor announced his intention to retire following a 24-year tenure; he officially retired in late October of the same year. Coinciding with this, the Elder Board engaged NL Moore & Associates to conduct an in-depth analysis of the church and provide guidance regarding the search for a new Senior Pastor.

BE Free Now

Following NL Moore's recommendations it was determined that we should seek an Intentional Interim Pastor to help the church improve conflict resolution and overall church health in preparation for a new Senior Pastor. The Elder Board secured the services of Vital Church Ministries to provide an Intentional Interim Pastor and lead the church through a revisioning process. Pat Hand started as our Intentional Interim Pastor in April of 2023.

In addition to our Senior Pastor's retirement, we recently parted ways with our long-time Assistant Pastor. We have seen a significant shift in our membership as a result. This has been a particularly difficult transition but we are thankful for a core of committed congregants who have weathered this season with grace.

BE Free Now

In the midst of these challenges we know that God is good. BE Free continues to be a faithful body of believers who are excited to see how God will work in and through our church family. We believe that BE Free is poised for positive change and we are excited to re-orient our ministries toward intentional discipleship and a renewed focus on outreach. Our greatest desire is to glorify God and share His goodness with our community.

Church Demographics

With the exception of Weekly Attendance and Voting Members, all church demographic information was gathered by NL Moore in the summer of 2022.

Weekly Attendance: 100-120

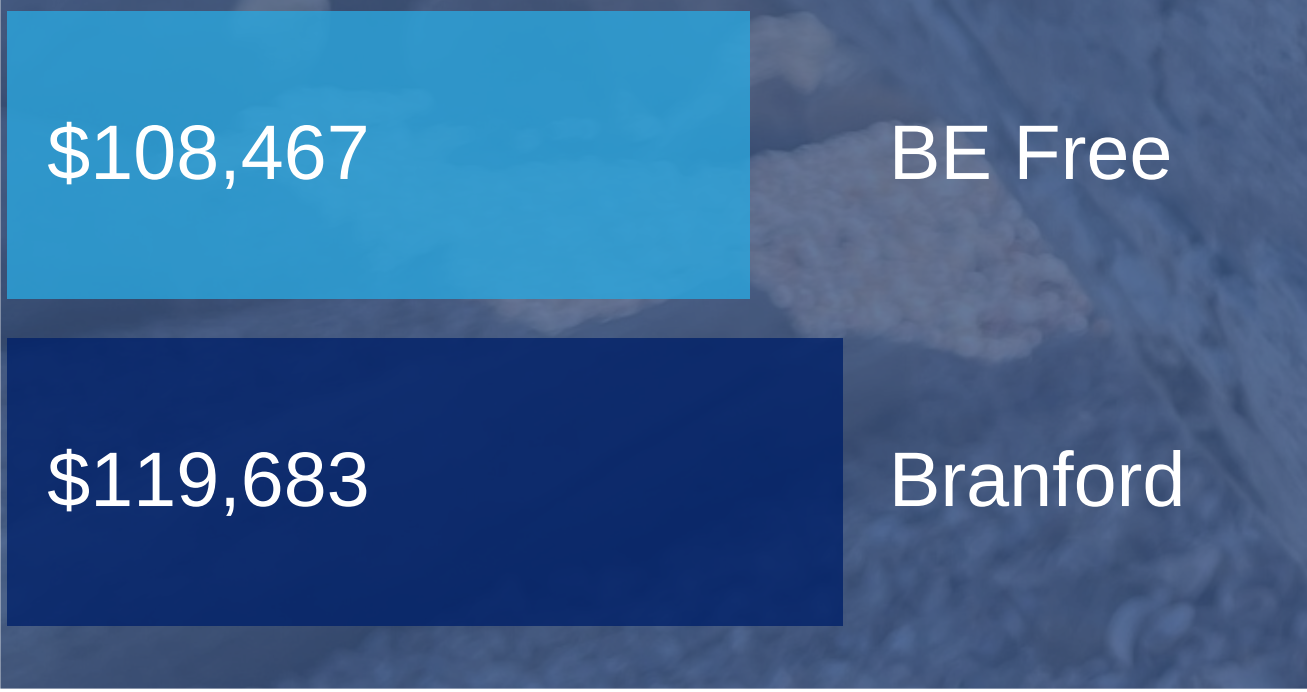
Voting Members: 110

Tenure:

Our Church family is primarily composed of long-time attendees. 80% of our church family has been here 5 years or more, with 38% of those attendees reporting a tenure of over 20 years.

Church Demographics

Average Household Income:

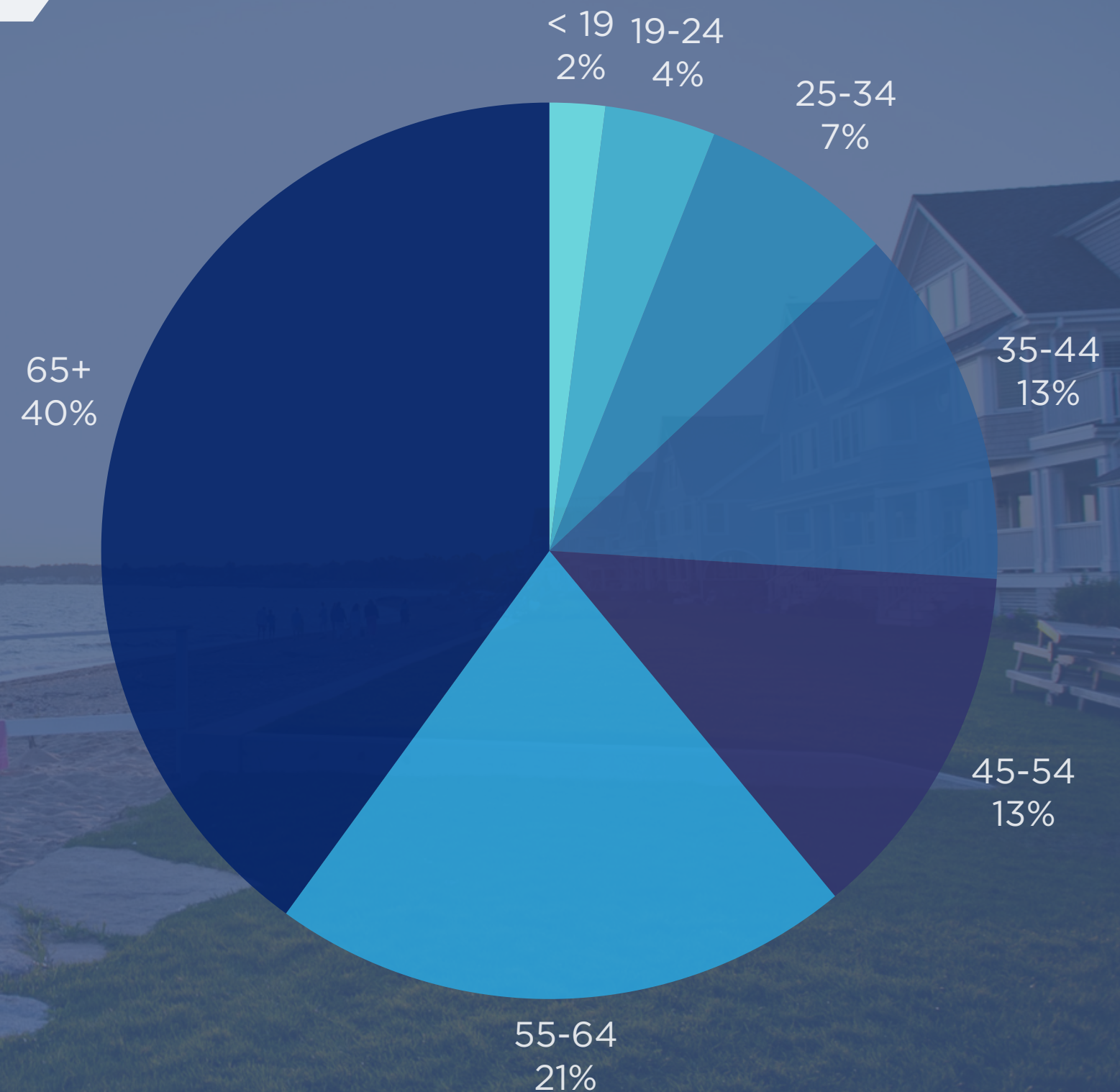


The average household income of BE Free attendees is \$108,467. This approximates Branford's average income of \$119,683.

Church Demographics

Age:

Over the past 10+ years we have seen our church body trend older. This is an area we seek to change by attracting and retaining young adults and families with children.



Church Demographics

Gender:

57% Female

43% Male



Church Demographics

Ethnic Background:

According to the 2020 Census, Branford has a population that is approximately 85% white alone, with the largest minority groups being Latino (6.7%), Asian (3.8%), Black or African American (3.3%) and two or more races (3.7%). By comparison, BE Free Church attendees reported the following ethnic backgrounds: White (94%), Black/African American (1%), Latino (1%), Other (4%).

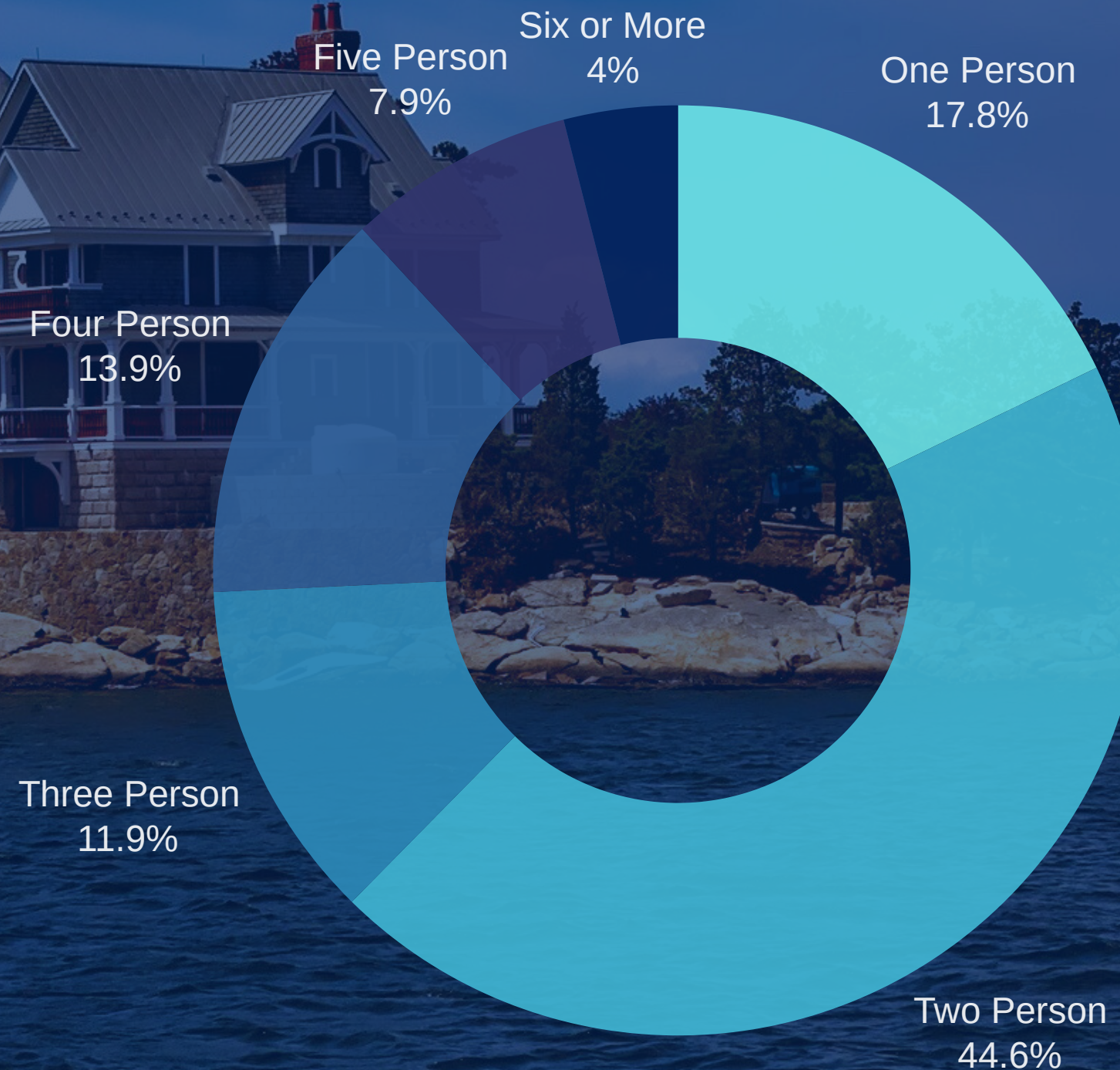
Church Demographics

Education:

As a whole, our congregation is well-educated with 22% of adults completing some college, 26% holding undergraduate degrees, and 32% holding one or more graduate degrees.

Church Demographics

Household Size:



The household size of our congregation reflects our aging population. Our 2022 census showed the breakdown depicted.

Where We're Going

The revisioning process that BE Free recently completed has revealed a desire for improved discipleship and outreach pathways. As a church, we have identified that we want to move:

1. Toward a more open, collaborative, connected leadership.
2. Toward an outward focus that is welcoming and includes all ages and cultures.
3. Toward a closer bond with our local community that allows us to engage with society and boldly share Christ's truth and grace on the Shoreline and beyond.

We believe that BE Free Church is poised for positive change. With a core group of faithful believers, we desire spiritual growth through discipleship and church growth through outreach and evangelism.

Statement of Faith

[Click here to view the EFCA Statement of Faith.](#)

Staff

Full Time: Intentional Interim Pastor - Pat Hand

Part-Time: Church Administrator - Michelle Thompson

Worship Director - Daniel Juarez

Accompanist - Cybil Juarez

Media Director - Julie Adams

Sexton - Liz Faisch

Ministries

BE Free has historically been a ministry-focused church. Current ministries include:

- Sunday School for all ages
 - This includes our Friendship Class for adults with special needs.
- Women's Bible Studies
- Youth Group for grades 6-12
- Men's Ministry which includes a weekly dinner and Bible Study
- Mastering Motherhood
 - A parachurch ministry that serves mothers of all ages and stages. Women from multiple churches attend and lead, as well as women who do not currently have a church home.
- Life Groups

Yearly Events

- Good Friday Service
- Easter Sunrise Service
- Sports and Arts Camp
- Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Packing
- Thanksgiving Food Drive
- Thanksgiving Eve Service and Pie Night
- Women's Christmas Party
- Family Christmas Concert
- Performance of Handel's Messiah
- Christmas Eve Service
- Youth Retreat to Camp Berea

Life in Branford

Branford is a picturesque New England town with a population of 28,000. Located on the shore of Long Island Sound, it is about 10 miles from New Haven, CT and Yale University. Branford is ideally located for entertainment, shopping, and adventure. Within an hour's travel, there is an abundance of museums and cultural attractions available. Additionally, within two hours (or less) one can travel to New York City, Boston, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Branford is a predominantly white and middle-class town, as are surrounding communities. Connecticut is one of the least religious states in the U.S. and Branford is representative of this trend. Branford and surrounding communities have increasing numbers of foreign-born residents and households that are headed by moms and dads, or unmarried singles. The Lord has provided a mission field in our backyard.

Life in Branford

Branford is considered a safe community with low crime and a good public school system. There is also a thriving homeschool community in the state, as well as a variety of private school options. With many lovely parks and community-sponsored events and activities, it is an excellent area in which to raise a family.

For more information about Branford, visit:

- <https://ctvisit.com/listings/town-branford>
- <https://www.zip06.com/town/branford>
- <https://www.branford.k12.ct.us>
- <https://www.branford-ct.gov>
- <https://www.shorelinechamberct.com>