

aboutfirst news

April, 2020 First United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls

Love First. Let's Gather, Grow, Go Together



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issue 234, April, 2020

First United Methodist Church
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aboutfirst.com

Announcements and editorial content for publication may be submitted to the First UMC media office by the 20th of each preceding month. Email to: chris.congdon@aboutfirst.com

Miss A Sermon?

If you miss a Sunday message from Pastor Scott or Pastor Matt, you'll find it on our youtube channel.

Go to our website at aboutfirst.com and scroll down to the "sermons" graphic, which will link you to all of our sermons and public videos.



A Time To Be Born

I miss Larry, my father-in-law. Most of all I miss my talks with him. He always made me rethink things a bit, and I had to up my game when he was attending worship.

I remember a lengthy discussion after an Easter sermon. It was Easter 2004, I know that because it was the Spring of Brood X – What is Brood X you ask? The largest population of cicadas on Earth ...and I had made it a big part of my Easter sermon that year, and Larry was surprised by that. (Actually I knew he'd like it.)

I like cicadas because just the thought of anything waiting 17 years to be born amazes me. We grow impatient waiting for the microwave to ding. Seventeen days of home quarantine and we go stir crazy. Seventeen years, my word! Cicadas are scary looking critters up close. I found one of those brown fossil-like shells stuck to a tree once. It had big, blank, empty eye sockets and sharp claws. If you look close you will see the brown shell has a neat little slit across the back. Some new living creature had pulled its waxy wings and legs out of that dried up shell and flown away; escaped into the trees to join a noisy chorus– to sing its heart out.

Why the cicada sings is a great mystery. The French biologist J. Henri Faber tells us that cicadas' bodies are specialized for singing. They sing for the joy of singing and to call for mates. Cicadas were born to sing. I'll tell you something else about cicadas. If you were to ask the cicada, I'll bet not one of them can tell you where they left that old brown husk of a skin. They left the grave clothes behind. Went to go sing.

What's that got to do with Easter? Well let me tell you, early on Easter morning, some women from Galilee went to the tomb where they had left Jesus. They came because they had been up all night, as people in grief often are. On this third day of their tears they look into the cave and there is nothing there except a pile of old clothes. (This too interested Larry, my asking why was that face towel was all rolled up neatly? Larry thought that was a funny bit to bring up...a mysterious bit too.)

You see the focus of Easter has often been on the empty tomb. But, like that cicada shell with the slit in the back, there is nothing there. No one can say what happened in that tomb because no one was there. Everyone arrived after the fact. They found a pile of clothes in an empty cave. Larry and I talked about the mystery of life and death that Easter. The tomb is not the point of Easter. The tomb is like the cicada shell.

The point of Easter is you and I, we were born to matter, to make some difference, to sing. But what if you never joined the chorus?

The cicada specialized to sing. I think that our lives are specialized for love. The mystery that called us into existence calls us now to express our unique selfhood. If that isn't done, then the universe is robbed of you and me.

The one who invites cicadas to sing is the same one who calls us to love. And the day comes when we can leave the old clothes behind. We are called to join the mighty chorus; to sing with all the siblings of God a glorious resurrection song, to shed that old skin and fly away.

Pastor Scott Kober



The Picture Looks Different Right Now

The picture of worship looks different right now, doesn't it. A month ago, who would have thought that we would be preaching to the world through empty sanctuaries, and meeting through our phones and computers? But here we are.

We're determined to keep sharing the Good News of Jesus and we're committed to finding ways to keep our family of faith together through this time of isolation. Our Sunday morning livestream is reaching more people than we would have imagined. We've even had regular viewers from Iowa City, Waverly, Fort Dodge, and Scotland! Pastor Scott and Pastor Matt have found ways to continue their Wednesday night classes. Jenna is working on home-based activities for kiddos (and all of us) which she shares on Wednesday nights. Our 6:00pm Facebook prayers have become popular: they involve different people signing-on to lead, and lots of you joining in. It warms our hearts to see your names and comments.

Our parish visitors are checking in with people by phone to be sure they are OK. While the church building is quiet these days, the work of ministry continues. We're still reaching out, sharing, and equipping each other for the lives of love that God calls us into – learning new ways to Love First.

2 Songs and a Sermon

The 2 Songs and a Sermon worship format was originally designed as an easy entry-point for newcomers, first-timers and busy folks. As the Covid-19 virus emergency unfolded, we realized that it was also a great format for livestream worship. A couple of songs help to center our minds, and then the pastor gets right to the point of the day's teaching. After the message, you'll be left with a song on your heart and some perspectives of faith in your head. Don't let social distance let you miss church.



- WORSHIP SCHEDULE -

for the duration of the
Corona Virus Emergency

Sunday, 8:30 am

Livestream on Facebook

Sunday, noon

video and resources on aboutfirst.com

Every evening, 6:00 pm

short reflection and prayers
livestream on Facebook

When Governor Reynolds and state health officials give clearance to resume normal gatherings, we will revert to our standard worship schedule.

Join the Facebook Group

We have created a new Facebook group to allow everyone to interact and share the ways they are finding to Love First. Want to join? Send a note to Chris or Jenna and we'll connect you.

Saving the Best for Last

The last week before Jesus' crucifixion was packed with events that are central to our faith. From his triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his death on the cross, Jesus was teaching who he was, and what God desires of us. Over the six Sundays of Lent we'll dig deep into the drama that has forever changed the way we understand our relationship with God. Remaining weeks:

- **April 5: Passion Sunday, The Crucifixion, Matthew 27:27-55**
- **April 12: Celebrate the Resurrection!**

Your Lenten Devotions

The Corona Virus has captured much of our attention, but it's still Lent, remember? How are you doing with our Lenten Gospel Reading Plan? If you haven't started yet, it's never too late to dig into your Bible and get caught up!

With this plan, you'll read approximately a chapter a day from the Gospels of John and Mark for parallel looks at the incredible life of Christ. Read for yourself and gain a better understanding of who Jesus was, and what his life, death, and resurrection means for people today.

date	read
Wed Apr 1	John 15
Thurs Apr 2	John 16
Fri Apr 3	John 17
Sat Apr 4	Mark 14:43-72
Sun Apr 5	Reading In Worship
Mon Apr 6	John 18
Tues Apr 7	Mark 15
Wed Apr 8	John 19
Thurs Apr 9	Mark 16
Fri Apr 10	John 20
Sat Apr 11	John 21
Sun Apr 12	Easter Sunday

additional Lenten resources can be found at <http://aboutfirst.com/>

Big gifts are not always the most significant

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

There is a tool that many preachers use called the Revised Common Lectionary. It is a breakdown of the scriptures that allow the preacher to teach through the Bible in 3 years time. While most of the time we preach in a sermon series format, the lectionary often informs our direction.

This past Sunday's Old Testament lectionary reading is what you just read at the beginning of the article. In it we encounter the story of David's anointing. It seems to me that like Samuel, most of us are initially surprised that God doesn't always choose the biggest and seemingly most capable to do his work. Often times, it is the seemingly insignificant people like David or Jesus whom God has chosen to do great things.

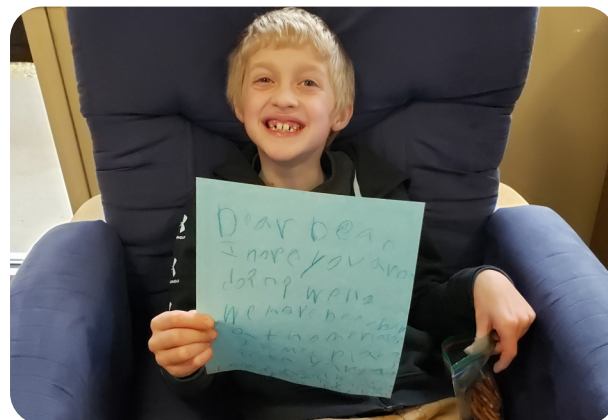
The same holds true for our gifts. Big gifts are fine, but they are not always the most significant. While some may think the pastor is the most most spiritually gifted, I have no idea how to sew in order to create medical masks for our first responders. I have no idea how to do website design to communicate with our members. I have no idea how to make cards for those who are shut in and homebound during this time. Perhaps this is one of your gifts. Big gifts are fine, but they are not always significant.

Have you ever been hesitant to do your part because you believed that anything you could contribute wouldn't really matter? The story of David teaches a different lesson. The story of our Lord and Savior reminds us that all matter in God's Kingdom. Particularly in this time of financial and cultural uncertainty, let us be prepared to allow the Lord to use us. Keep the faith and be encouraged. The most unexpected people often accomplish the greatest things!

Be Bold, Be Strong,
Pastor Matt German



Megan C wrote a note to her teacher



Connor E made this note for his elderly friend, Dean Hoover

New Online & Mobile Giving Options

Give Online: We have implemented the Vanco GivePlus portal to allow online giving through our aboutfirst.com website. Vanco provides secure transaction services to thousands of churches in the USA, including many in our community. It's safe and easy. You'll find it on the giving pages at aboutfirst.com. Try it now.

GivePlus Mobile App: This is secure and easy! Want to be able to give to First UMC with four taps of your thumb? Download the GivePlus app onto your mobile devices. You'll have options for one-time gifts, recurring gifts, general offerings and mission projects. Set up an account, or use your phone camera to scan your debit/credit card. GivePlus app is available for both androids and people.

**GIVE
PLUS⁺**

LOVE FIRST
GATHER. GROW. GO
TOGETHER

LOVE FIRST
BY THE NUMBERS

141

Our Celebration & Our Challenge

Dear Friends,

As we emerge from the cold of winter, it's a good opportunity to reflect on the vitality of our Church and assess how we're prepared to grow during this coming season of rebirth. I want to thank you for your continued financial support of our Church. This congregation has a strong history of answering God's call for joyful and generous giving. We have much to celebrate with your response to our call for paying down the mortgage by 2020. As a result of your kindness and sacrifice, we're happy to report that our mortgage is completely paid off! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!! We will celebrate this when we are able to gather again! This building will sustain us for many years in fulfilling Christ's mission to grow disciples for the world!

For as much as there is to celebrate, there remains much need to continue supporting our Church. Giving pledges to our operating budget have declined in recent years and we have a shortfall of \$110,000 for 2020. As you also might expect, our Church is not immune to the effects of the Corona Virus. We've experienced an especially sharp decline in giving toward existing pledges as we've stopped gathering in person for worship. However, our Church staff and lay leaders are still very active keep ministries going. Did you know, it takes roughly \$60,000 per month to sustain our ministries, even if we're not gathering in person?

Church staff and Finance Committee are taking steps to reduce expenses by cutting non-essential spending, curtailing apportionments payments, and not filling vacant staff positions. We sincerely thank you for your financial contributions thus far and ask that you continue giving toward existing pledges. Where possible, we also ask that you prayerfully consider making additional gifts to the operating budget this year. Although in person worship is not an option for now, you can still mail your gifts to the Church. Also, a great new online giving option is available on our website at www.aboutfirst.com, using the "Giving" link.

Now, perhaps more than ever, we need to come together as the body of Christ. We truly cannot do this without you and are deeply grateful for your continued support. Blessings to you and your family,

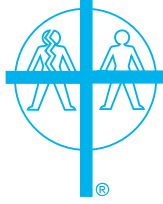
FUMC Finance Committee

Thank you for being a contributor in your community and for continuing to host a blood drive when blood is so desperately needed. Thank you to the 2 first time donors who stepped up to try blood donation! The March 23 LifeServe Blood Drive at First UMC yielded:
33 Registered Donors
47 Units Collected
That's enough to save or sustain 141 people's lives!

Next blood drive is April 27

Bear One Another's Burdens

In Galatians 6, Paul tells us to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." At FUMC our Stephen Ministers have been trained and organized to do just that. They provide one-to-one care, prayers, and support to those who are going through a difficult time.



During this time of isolation and distancing ourselves from one another, we ask our church family members to include our current Stephen Ministers and their care receivers in your prayers. We are unable to visit our care receivers face to face at present, a time when hurting people need human interaction and care.

Our training class that began in October of 2019 has concluded in early March. The seven that attended the class wait for their commissioning that has been postponed. We look forward to them joining the larger group and being able to provide care with their listening and support.

UMC Summer Camps

Everyone is going to need a getaway when the virus emergency is over! Check out the options at the Iowa United Methodist Camps at <https://www.iaumc.org/camps>

April Mission of the Month

Our mission this month is to keep each other safe from the Corona Virus and to support First UMC's ongoing budget needs. Every single month we reach out to another worthy cause, but sometimes a little self-care is in order. This is one of those times. Please direct your April mission dollars to support First UMC CF.

Rocky Railway Vacation Bible School June 5th-7th

Vacation Bible School will be looking a little different this year. We will kick off on the night Friday, June 5th, spend all day together on Saturday June 6th and end Sunday Morning with a VBS themed worship service.

Also, new this year we asked the children to vote on the theme for VBS. The kids have spoken and we will be climbing aboard the Rocky Railway. We will be taken on a Faith-Filled Adventure where kids discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's up's and down's. We are looking for volunteers if you would like to become a part of Vacation Bible School, please contact Jenna Engel.



2020 Mission u:

Learning Together for Transformation of the World

The United Methodist Women (UMW) Mission u summer and fall events are wonderful mission education opportunities to study current issues impacting society. Whether you are young or old, laity or clergy, a UMW member or not, a first timer or attend every year, you are invited. All participate in the "Spiritual Growth Study: Finding Peace in the Midst of Anxiety". Also, attendees may choose to attend either the Special Issue Study - "Pushout: Mass Incarceration; the School-to-Prison Pipeline" or the Special Anniversary Study "Women United for Change: 150 Years in Mission".

WHEN: July 19 - 21 Summer Mission u
October 16-18. Fall Mission u

WHERE: Iowa Valley Continuing Education Center, 3702 S. Center Street, Marshalltown, Iowa

You may obtain a copy of the brochure and registration form at the counter on the back of the Welcome Center in the Gathering Place.



Thank You

Thank you for all the prayers and support at the death of my husband, Casey. And also the prayers and concern on the illness of my son, Jerry, who lives in Marion, Arkansas. Your support has meant all the world to me and my family.

Ruth Tucker and family

I would like to thank the congregation for praying for us as I recover from my broken shoulder. For all the visits, calls, food items and such, thank you. It's wonderful to have the support of the church during this time.

I'm recovering well and physical therapy is progressing nicely. A special thank you to Pastor Scott Kober for his visit. Thank you to all who helped with the quilt throw. Thank you all so much.
Deb Lee

Thank you for the beautiful rose for my birthday. It lasted a long time. We have a great staff in our church.
Marlene Thurman

Thank you to Jane for delivering the beautiful rose for my birthday. I am so sorry I was not home to visit.
Lillian Shoemaker

Thank you Jane Wyckoff for the lovely birthday rose. Thank you also for 15 years of delivering these birthday roses and bringing joy to so many. We appreciate your visits and prayers. God Bless.
Jerry and Shirley Fogleman

Thanks so much for the cards and beautiful rose and visit with Jane. It made my day extra special.
Shirley Johnson

Sympathy to:

- Martha Anderson and Jim Anderson on the death of their sister and aunt, Helen Freda Davis, on February 26.
- Friends and family of Wanda Koupal. Wanda died February 24. Her service was held in Reinbeck on February 29.
- Dave Harris and his family on the death of his sister, Ruth Esbeck, on March 2.
- Friends and family of Joe Workman. Joe died March 8 in Mason City, where he had lived for many years. His service was held March 14 at Richardson Funeral Service.
- Stephanie Buchs and her family on the loss of her uncle.
- Carl & Ann Campbell on the death of their daughter-in-law, Claudia, on March 13.
- Lauren and Scott Raap (Jim and Sandy Noelting's daughter and son-in-law). Scott's father died March 13.
- Family and friends of Isabel Cummings. Isabel died March 18. A memorial service will be held later.

Send a Card or Note

Many care facilities are not allowing visitors, even family. Send a card or a letter to our friends who are isolated right now. Phone calls and cards are also much appreciated for those who are staying home. Think of who sits around you in worship or in a group, and give them a call or a card. We still have updated photo directories at our Welcome Center. Pick one up Monday-Friday.

Doris Crandall, Gean Durbin, Jeaneene Kemmerer
Martin Suites
420 E. 11th St, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Marlys Cook, Helen Hannan, Ruby Hockey, Richard Hunt,
Ellen Opsal, Marilyn Pape
Stanard Assisted Living
420 E. 11th St, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Wanda Anderson, Marian Christason, Ruth Gooden,
Mardy Hermann, Jack Hovelson, Homer Leymaster
Windhaven Assisted Living
5500 S. Main St, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Gil Hewett, Joe Nelson, Lura Treloar
Deery Suites
5307 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls IA 50613

LaVonne Neese, Russ Nielsen, Irene Raub, Dotty Rokes
Thalman Square
5500 S. Main St, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Marilyn Geesaman, Virginia Van Tassel
Nation Cottage
5111 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Vivian Hill, Thelma Macheska, Darlene Prashak
New Aldaya Lifescapes
7517 University Ave, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Martha Anderson, Darlene Jordan, Perry Thurman
Pinnacle Care
1223 Prairie View Rd, Cedar Falls IA 50613

Betty O'Brien
Friendship Village- Lakeview Lodge
312 Southbrook Dr, Waterloo IA 50701

Linda Rundall
Sunrise Hill Care & Rehab Center
909 6th St, Traer IA 50675

Noreen Roth
Good Neighbor Society
105 McCarren Dr, Manchester IA 52057

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First United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls



Online Worship

Sunday, 8:30 a.m.

Sunday, noon

Daily, 6:00pm

Livestream on Facebook

video and worship resources at aboutfirst.com
reflection and prayers, Facebook Live

Television

Cedar Falls (CFU) Channel 95.5, Friday @ 8:00 pm, Sunday @ 9:00 am

Waterloo (MediaCom) Channel 17, Sundays @ 11:00am & 9:00 pm

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Matt German, Associate Pastor, matt.german@aboutfirst.com

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John Bentley, Head Custodian

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Emily Terpstra, Custodian

Jane Wyckoff, Parish Visitor