

December 2016
issue 195



ABOUT FIRST

First United Methodist Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa



Thoughts from Steve

One of my highlights of our Holy Land trips is traveling to Bethlehem. There is no other place like Bethlehem. It is the place of our Savior's birth. That makes it unique among all the towns and cities of the world. It has its own special character and is of great historic importance. It is the home town of David. The beautiful story of Ruth unfolds in the fields that surround Bethlehem.

The first Christian Roman Emperor was Constantine. He legalized the Christian faith all across the Roman Empire. His mother, Helena, soon traveled to the Holy Land, and located the site of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the site of his resurrection, and other important sites. She was sent to build churches over these sites so Christians could come and worship.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was dedicated in the year 339. This church was destroyed in 521, and the current one was built in 531. It is the oldest existing Christian church still functioning as a place of worship. It is very old, and the inside is covered in dark soot from years of burning candles and lanterns. They are in the process of remodeling it.

The Church of the Nativity was built above the Grotto of the Nativity in which Jesus was born. This Grotto is under the Altar of the church. You climb down to the grotto on very old stone steps that have been worn down by 1,500 years of pilgrims seeking to worship in the place where Jesus was born. Down in the small cave is a recess where a large silver star which designates the spot, as tradition has it, where Jesus was born. The star has fourteen points and is inscribed with a Latin inscription which translates: "HERE JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY."

Next to the star is the Holy Manger. The manger is hewn out of stone, and you can easily imagine a cattle trough turned into a new baby's cradle. Next to the manger is an altar devoted to the Three Wise Men, and above the altar is a worn mosaic depicting them worshipping the baby Jesus. This place is inspiring, and has a feeling of holiness. Our groups have stood and sung carols like "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Silent Night". My eyes are tearing up right now just thinking about how special that moment is as the singing reverberates around the small cave.

During the seventh century, when the Persians invaded the Holy Land, they destroyed all Christian churches they found except for the Church of the Nativity. According to one legend, when the Persians saw the mosaic depicting the wise men from the east worshipping Jesus they were astonished by the sight of the Persian wise men. Out of respect for them, they left the church intact.

When the Crusaders came they used the church as a fortress. They lowered the size of the front door so no one could ride a horse inside to pillage the church. Now all who come to the church must bow down in order to enter. It is called the "Door of Humble Access." You have to bow or you bonk your head! Just as the Shepherds and Wise Men humbly bowed before the new born King that first Christmas, you must humbly bow to enter the place of his birth.

Each time I go to Bethlehem I am impressed by the fact that people from all over the world come to visit where Jesus was born. It is a holy place. As we sing the carols this Christmas, I pray that all the hopes and fears of all the years come together in our celebration of Christ's birth. May God's love warm your heart as we remember what happened in Bethlehem on a dark, cold night when a star lit up the sky.

Have a blessed Christmas -

Pastor Steve and Janet



Steve's Stocking

And they hung their stockings . . .

Children are a precious gift from God.

We support many ministries that help children receive the necessities such as food, clothing and medicine. One of the ministries we support is the Inner City Parish in Des Moines. I will be hanging my Christmas Stocking outside my office door to collect stocking stuffers such as small toys, hot wheels, puzzles, crayons and color books for the children. These toys are used as incentives for their tutoring program.

Christmas Eve Candlelight – Light Up the Darkness

For many of us, Christmas really becomes Christmas when they are holding a lighted candle and singing, “Silent Night”. We will be offering three candlelight services on Christmas Eve this year. All services will include familiar carols and the wonderful scriptures telling of Christ’s birth. Each service will be similar, and yet, each will have something different to make it special. Invite your family and friends as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

5:00 Candlelight

This service will be held in Fellowship Hall as members of our Transformation Praise Team will lead us in joyously welcoming Christ’s birth. A special time for children will also be a part of this service.

7:00 p.m. Candlelight

This service will be held in the Sanctuary with familiar carols and special music. A special time for children will also be a part of this service.

11:00 p.m. Candlelight

There’s something magical about coming to the church late at night on Christmas Eve. Maybe it is to recall the excitement of the shepherds arriving at the manger to see the new born King. Or could it be the quietness of the hour after all the noise of the Christmas rush is over? We will sing the familiar carols and hear once again the wonderful story of Christ’s birth through scripture. Again this year, we are including Communion in this service to celebrate the coming of the Son of God in the baby Jesus.

Christmas Eve Communion in the Chapel - 9: a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Share in a special time of remembering the reason for the season, and make holy communion a new part of your Christmas tradition. The Chapel will be open all day on Christmas Eve for “come and go” Communion beginning at 9:00 a.m. The Chapel will remain open for Communion until 10:00 p.m. We will be offering Communion at the 11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service this year. Many churches around the world celebrate midnight Christmas communion to remember our Savior’s birth in a lowly manger in Bethlehem.

Christmas Day - One Combined Service at 10:00 a.m.

Christmas Day falls on Sunday this year! We will have one combined service at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. We invite you to come in your new Christmas sweater or favorite “old” sweater as we share in the afterglow of Christmas. There will be no Sunday School. We will sing the carols and continue the celebration of our Savior’s birth. Come and celebrate Christ’s birthday!

New Year’s Day Sunday – One Combined Service at 10:00 a.m.

As with Christmas Day, New Year’s Day falls on Sunday. We will have one combined service at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. We will be using the Wesley Covenant Service and serving Communion. Our founder John Wesley established this service on December 25, 1747, and strongly urged Methodists to renew their Covenant with God. It is traditionally used on the first Sunday of the year. The Covenant Service will be a very meaningful way to begin the New Year.



Advent

Advent is a time to prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming of Christ. It can be a joyous time or an introspective time as we anticipate the miracle of God coming to live with us.

Traditional Worship

Pastor Steve will be looking into the ancient - Old Testament - prophecies, and how the coming of Christ is a fulfillment of God’s promises to His People. Sunday mornings in the sanctuary, 8:30 & 11:00.

Transformation Worship

Pastor Matt will look back through the eyes of Mary at Jesus’ life - from the end to the beginning, for a better understanding of what he means to the world. Sunday mornings in Fellowship Hall, 8:30.

Who’s At Washington Chapel?

It’s been a year and a half since we began our relationship with Washington Chapel UMC, and both of our churches have been blessed. Join the congregation at this little white church on the hill in a beautiful rural setting. It’s lovely, peaceful, and the members and friends are always happy to meet Jordan Derhammer’s friends from First UMC.

Washington Chapel is just north of Cedar Falls at 7035 W Bennington Rd (the corner of Ford and W Bennington Rd). Services begin at 10:30 every Sunday morning. Feel free to join them for worship and to support your friends from First.

Here are the speakers for this month:
December 4 – David Glenn-Burns – with communion

December 11 – Mark Fransdal

December 18 – Jon Cooper

December 25 – Jordan Derhammer

CFPD Thank you

We have had a number of ways to interact with our police department this fall: we made a contribution to CFPD's body camera fund, UMW hosted an officer to speak at their October meeting, and we sent Thanks, Appreciation and Prayers through the November TAP program. Please know that CFPD appreciates us in return. Here is the text of a thank-you note we received:

On behalf of the City of Cedar Falls and all members of the Cedar Falls Police Department, we would like to thank you for your recent contributions to our Body Camera Fundraiser.

Over \$33,000 was donated by 119 donors. These donations will help us to purchase the latest technology in body cameras and issue one to every Police Officer.

This new technology is vital to protect our Officers, collect evidence and accurately record all interactions with the public. Your generous donation has allowed us to expand the use of this important tool to every Cedar Falls Police Department Officer.

Thank you again for your support!!

*James P. Brown,
Mayor of Cedar Falls
Ronald S. Gaines,
City Administrator
Jeff D. Olson
Police Chief/Public Safety Director*

It Was NOT a Silent Night

Growing up I really thought I knew everything. I thought I knew more than my parents. I have always been an experiential learner so my path to wisdom was often painful and sometimes expensive. But as I have aged and have gained wisdom (and lost hair), I have come to realize that my parents weren't always wrong. In fact, almost always, they were right. I wish I could have seen things through the eyes of my parents. It would have saved me much pain and grief through life. As a parent of a toddler, I can forecast the outcome of my daughter's decisions just as my parents could for me. Hopefully she will one day see the world through my eyes, as I now do with my own parents.

This year we'll be preparing our hearts for Christmas by looking at Jesus' life through Mary's eyes, the mother of Jesus. In focusing on Mary, we're going to do something a bit unusual. We'll tell her story by starting not at the beginning, but at the end. In the first week of advent (Nov 27) we'll start with Mary's death and the last years of her life. Then in each succeeding week we will work our way backward, from the Crucifixion and Jesus' public ministry (Dec 4), to his discovery in the Temple as a twelve year old boy (Dec 11), to the announcement of a savior to come (Dec 18), until finally we will end on Christmas eve with the birth of Jesus (Dec 24). In each week we will consider the meaning of the birth of Jesus by looking at the significance of his life, death, and resurrection. Worship will be engaging and full of new lessons this advent season.

As Mary came to learn, God doesn't promise a perfect, peaceful life or a silent, holy night. That's how life was for Mary, and that is how life is for us. Life doesn't go according to our plans. Sometimes it's hard and painful and scary. Yet, in the messiness of life, God is at work, bringing blessings out of pain. That's the message of Christmas.

I invite you to join us this advent for what will be a series that gives us new eyes to the meaning of Christmas, as we view it through the eyes of Mary.

Be Bold, Be Strong,
Pastor Matt German

Winter Weather Policies

Worship

This is Iowa and it is winter and weather happens. When winter weather gets bad the pastors will decide if changes should be made to the worship schedule.

Weekly Activities

Cedar Falls Schools will be our guide. If Cedar Falls Schools have cancelled classes or dismissed early then church activities will also be cancelled for the rest of the day and evening.

Cancellations will be broadcast on both KWWL Channel 7 and KCRG Television Channel 9 and posted online at aboutfirst.com. We'll also try to get the word out on facebook and twitter. We also ask that you use your best judgement and do not venture out into dangerous weather.



Finance Update - Still time to get Estimate of Giving Cards in.

Over the past few years our needs have increased while during the same period of time our giving has leveled off. In spite of the fact that we are a growing church, our giving has not kept pace with our growing needs and activities. Our pledges for 2017 have fallen short in meeting our Budget Goals. To date, we have received 218 pledges for a total of \$595,225.00. Last year at this time we had received 234 pledges for a total of \$695,461.00. This reflects a shortfall of more than \$100,000!

In order to balance the budget in 2017, the Finance Committee will be basing the budget on the returns of our Finance Campaign. With the difference of \$100,000 the Finance Committee is planning to meet to make some drastic cuts in our 2017 proposed budget. The proposed budget was only a 1% increase from this year's budget, but the difference in pledges will require the major cuts.

Your estimate of giving cards do make a difference as the Finance Committee seeks to make sure that we can meet the financial needs of our church in 2017. Every gift is important and your response has never been more important for us to continue growing as a church. If you have not returned your estimate of giving card, we encourage you to do so as soon as possible. . If there are any questions about your pledge or giving, please contact our Financial Manager Deb Bernard at 266-1713. Please continue to pray for the church. Together we are doing great work for the cause of Christ.

Year-End Giving Reminder -

Thank you for your generous support of Christ and His ministry by your faithful giving this past year. There is still time to fulfill your giving goal or to make a year-end gift for the 2016 tax year. Please note that if you intend to hand-deliver your gift, it needs to be here by 10:00 AM on Friday, December 30. If you plan to mail your gift, it must be postmarked by December 31.

Christmas Caroling - Sunday, December 11

Join the mighty throng of carolers and well-wishers in brightening the lives of many of our homebound, and nursing home residents on Sunday, December 11 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. It is one of the most heartwarming things we can do in helping spread the joy of Christmas. For some families, caroling has become a family tradition as a way to add more meaning to their celebration of Christmas. We are hoping for several carloads so we can split up and visit more people.

Christmas Bell Concert - Sunday, December 11

This is an annual treat, and for many, the official start of the Christmas season! Our bell choirs will present their Christmas concert on Sunday, December, 11 at 7:00pm in the sanctuary. We'll hear carols, jazz, and the bells have a few guest musicians, too. There is no admission charge - this is the ringers' gift to you.



Christmas Poinsettia

Christmas poinsettia are a beautiful way to honor or remember a loved one. Order yours using the envelope available at the Welcome Center. Poinsettia will be on display in the church until Christmas Eve, at which point you are welcome to take it home with you. Your honorific request will be acknowledged in a bulletin insert. Poinsettias are \$12 each.

Financial Update-

2016 Budget	\$881,581
YTD Receipts	\$679,335
YTD Expenses	\$679,946
October Receipts	\$71,910
October Expenses	\$64,916
Mortgage Balance November 30 -	\$695, 304

Consider Automatic Giving

You'll never need to remember to write a check again! It is quick and easy to set up. Contact our Financial Manager, Deb Bernard for details. 319-266-1713 or emailed deb.bernard@aboutfirst.com

events

December 4 - Christmas Shopping

World's Window: World's Window will be at our church on Sunday, December 4 with all kinds of fair trade items to sell. Pick up some information about their shop and the fair trade practices that the shop supports. Their mission is to market handcrafted items made by fair trade artisans from economically depressed countries around the world. By choosing fair trade products, you are not only accessing high quality products, but you are also making a difference in the lives of people who would otherwise be unemployed or underemployed. There is sure to be something just right for your loved ones this Christmas.

Get A Great Book! Dr. Gene Young, who was the Senior Pastor here in the mid eighties, will be in the Gathering Place following the morning worship services on Sunday, December 4 to sell his latest book, "Walking and Wondering". The subtitle is "Inspiration for Walkers". The book is like a devotional book. Each short essay (about two pages) takes some object he has observed while walking and the object triggers a spiritual message. The price is \$14.95 plus tax making the total \$16.

December 6 - Food Bank Work Crew

Here's a fun and easy way to help the food insecure in our community.....

Mark your calendar to help at the Food Bank at 1605 Lafayette Street in Waterloo. Often we fill grocery bags with kid friendly food for the Backpack program. Sometimes we get selected for other much needed jobs. It's always a good time and a great bunch of people. You can carpool with Lisa or get yourself to the Food Bank and come into the Volunteer Entrance. The Methodists and friends will be there from 6:00 to no later than 8:00pm.

December 6 - Grief Support Session

The holidays are especially difficult if you are grieving a loss. Our First UMC Grief Support Team wants you to know that you are in our thoughts and prayers this holiday season. Our next group grief support session will be held on Tuesday, December 6th from 2:00 to 3:30 pm in the church parlor. Please look for the holiday care notes on the counter in the Gathering Place for free brochures to help you during this Christmas season.

December 7 - Semester Finale

CrazyFunBusy Wednesday Nights

Wednesday night is Church Night for Everyone. Join us Devenber 7 for the last one before our mid-winter break. We'll have a good old-fashioned **Christmas potluck** for our Filling Station meal. Tell Jenna if you can bring something to share. Come for the Food, Fellowship, Fun & Fusion for all ages. CrazyFunbusy Wednesday nights will be back again beginning January 11.

December 14 -

What's the deal with Frankincense and Myrrh?

Applications of essential oils in Biblical times were extensive. 36 of the 39 books of the Old Testament and 10 of the 27 books of the New Testament mention essential oils or the plants that produce them. These oils were used to heal bodies, minds and spirits. They were the original source of healing prior to all the modern medicine we find today. You are invited to learn about Oils of the Bible on December 14 at 6:30 pm in the church library. Bring your Bible with you. Snacks and oils to smell and touch provided. Please note: this is not a sales event. Just come and learn about the rich history of oils in the Bible and how they were used. RSVP to Ginger L'Heureux at 319.883.9181.

December 15 - First Friends Potluck

Everyone is welcome! Spend some time enjoying good food, card games, dominos, cribbage, etc. Fellowship is an important part of the gathering. Check us out! Come and get better acquainted with others in the church. Couples and singles are welcome. Bring a dish to share and your own table service. We meet on the third Thursday of every month from noon until 2 pm in the Gathering Place.

December 18 - Country Church Christmas

You're invited as Washington Chapel holds their annual Christmas celebration at 6:30pm. Come in to the friendly warmth of our small, country church and sing and celebrate the season with us.

December 27 - LifeServe Blood Drive

We are hosting the next blood drive on TUESDAY, December 27 from 12:30-6:00. Donors, cookie bakers, and hosts are needed. They have quite a few appointments slots to fill. Sign up to donate at www.lifeservebloodcenter.org. Use the sign-up sheet at the Welcome Center to let Lisa know if you can donate cookies or chat and serve cookies to the donors for an hour or so.

Every Thursday - Zumba

Zumba with us on Thursdays at 5:30 pm in our Fellowship Hall! A free-will contribution of a couple of bucks is appreciated. Contact mary.friedrich@cfu.net if you have questions. Come and dance...it's never too late to join us on this fun fitness adventure!

Recurring Weekly:

Sunday

8:00 prayer in the chapel
 8:30 Transformation Worship
 8:30 Traditional Service, sanctuary
 9:30 Fellowship time, Gathering Place
 9:45 Sunday School for all ages
 10:30 Washington Chapel Worship
 11:00 Traditional Service, sanctuary
 6:00 Les Cloches d'Or rehearsal, sanctuary
 7:30 Chapel Ringers rehearsal, sanctuary

Tuesday

7:00 Men's Breakfast
 9:30 Tuesday Bible Study, chapel
 9:30-1:00 Quilters/Stitchers, O59
 4:30-6:00 Community Meal, Fellowship Hall
 6:30 Transformation Band, Fellowship Hall
 6:30-8:00 men's group
 7:00-9:00 AA, O55

Wednesday

9:00 Women Connected by Prayer, parlor
 5:15 AA, O55
 6:00 Tower Bells
 6:30 WOW AA, O55
 7:30 Chancel Choir

Thursday

5:30-6:30 Zumba, Fellowship Hall
 7:00 Transformation Band, Fellowship Hall

Also Scheduled....

THURSDAY December 1

evening Grief Support Dinner

SUNDAY December 4

Second Sunday in Advent
 World's Window is here 8-12:30
 Dr Gene Young book sales between services
 10:30 Washington Chapel - Dave GB
 4:00-7:00 Junior Girl Scouts, Parlor
 5:00-6:30 Confirmation class, library
 6:00 Boy Scouts

MONDAY December 5

9:30 UMW Board Meeting, library
 5:00 Stephen Ministry potluck, Gath Plac
 6:00-8:30 Cub Scouts, Fellowship Hall

TUESDAY December 6

2:00-3:30 Grief support, parlor
 6:30 Cubs and Lions combined meeting, GP
 6:00 Food Bank Work Crew

WEDNESDAY December 7

LAST BIG WEDNESDAY NIGHT THIS YEAR!
 8:45-11:15 Stephen Ministry Training, O58
 5:15-6:00 Filling Station.GP
 5:15-5:45 children's choir, choir room
 6:00-7:15 More than Moms, parlor
 6:00-7:15 BLAST
 6:00 Youth Group, 3rd floor
 6:00-7:15 Men's group, O59
 6:15-7:30 Tower Bell rehearsal, sanctuary
 6:30 WOW AA, O55
 7:15 FUSION Tonight, Matt German
 7:30-8:30 Chancel Choir rehearsal, choir rm

THURSDAY December 8

11:30 UMW Christmas lunch and program
 6:30 SPRC, O57

FRIDAY December 9

3:30-5:30 Girl Scouts, library

SATURDAY December 10

7:00-11:30 Santa Snow Shuffle hospitality

SUNDAY December 11

Third Sunday in Advent
 Deadline for Angel tree gifts
 9:45ish Children's Christmas program, sanct
 10:30 Washington Chapel - Mark Fransdal
 2:00-4:00 caroling
 7:00 Christmas Bell concert
 7:00 Boy Scouts, Fellowship Hall

MONDAY December 12

3:45-5:00 Girl Scouts

TUESDAY December 13

1:30 Miriam Circle, library
 6:30 Prayer Team, chapel

WEDNESDAY December 14

Poinsettia Order Deadline
 8:45-11:15 Stephen Ministry Training, O58
 2:00 Communion Service, Western Home
 6:30 Oils of the Bible, library

THURSDAY December 15

12:00 1st Friends Potluck, Gathering Place
 5:00 Grief support Christmas light tour

SUNDAY December 18

Fourth Sunday in Advent
 Neighbor Helping Neighbor offering
 Poinsettia insert in bulletin
 9:45 Sunday School for all ages
 10:30 Washington Chapel - Jon Cooper
 6:00 Christmas Bells Rehearsal, sanctuary
 7:00 Boy Scouts, Fellowship Hall ???

MONDAY December 19

8:00-8:45 youth breakfast in cafe
 10:00 Deborah Circle
 6:30 Worship Committee, library

TUESDAY December 20

Newsletter deadline
 6:30-7:30 Daisy Girl Scouts, Gathering Place

WEDNESDAY December 21

9:30-11:30 MOMs group, library and gym
 11:00 Windsor Care Chapel service
 6:30 WOW AA, O55

SATURDAY December 24

Christmas Eve
 8:am - 10:pm Communion in Chapel
 5:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight
 7:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight
 11:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight

SUNDAY December 25

Christmas Day
 10:00 Christmas Worship, one service only
 10:30 Washington Chapel
 - Jordan Derhammer

MONDAY December 26

church office closed

TUESDAY December 27

12:30-6:00 Blood Drive, Gathering Place

WEDNESDAY December 28

2:00 Windermere communion service

FRIDAY December 30

noon Newsletter Mailing Crew

SATURDAY December 31

New Year's Eve

Learn & Grow

Adult Sunday School

Everyone is welcome - you do not need to be a member of First UMC to attend.

Living Word

Will spend time each week sharing and caring for each other then move on to study different books of the Bible. Room 057 Contact: Terri Grover

CCF (Christ Centered Families)

This class will focus on strengthening our families and developing our young children into strong Christians. Room: 055, Kevin & Lori Price

Growing Christians

Our studies generally vary during the year from Bible studies, applying Biblical principles and the gifts that God puts into our lives. Room 056, Kris Rash

Open Door

Our discussions are based on videos that help us better understand the Bible and its influence on our lives. 061 Contact: Sue Mutchler & Pauline Harding

Kaleidoscope

This group is for anyone willing to tackle any topic! Room 058 Gil Hewett

Seekers

The Seekers present several small studies/discussions each year (no homework) to help grow our faith in Jesus Christ. Room: 060 Contact: Debbie Dance.

The Flock

The Flock welcomes all young adults (college & beyond) for fun, fellowship and study as we look at how the world around us influences our lives as Christians. Third Floor Café, contact Lesley Toma

F.R.O.G.

This class studies biblical themes and seeks concrete ways to put those lessons into action. Library: Contact Mark Schlatter.

Quick & Easy Daily Devotion

Check out the literature rack across from the office for the latest "Upper Room" daily devotional booklet. Each page includes a passage to look up in your Bible, a short verse to supplement that passage, and a brief story or meditation written by people from around the world. The daily devotion ends with a suggested prayer. It's a great resource to get into God's word and put it into practice every day. Each booklet covers two months, and at \$1.25 the price can't be beat.

Question, Answer, Study, Lead

One way to challenge yourself and explore new areas of faith is to lead a short-term study group. We would love to fill our calendar with six to eight week bible studies and small groups. Short-term studies offer a chance to dig into issues without a long-term obligation. It's not as hard as you might think to be a leader. We have resources available for book and/or video-based studies on all kinds of Christian topics. If you have interest in pursuing a study, contact Jan Hoover. We'll help you get the materials, reserve meeting space, get your group on the church calendar, and we'll even publicize your study.



A New Perspective on Church Missions

Change your vision of the world! See the world like Jesus does. Dive into God's word and the story of his work on the earth. Learn to live your life with eternal significance and purpose. Register for Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. Immanuel Lutheran Church, Monday evenings, Jan 16-May 1, 6:00-8:45 pm. \$225 if registered before December 15th. First UMC and Threehouse students qualify for additional scholarship help, too (see Lisa in the church office). Register at perspectives.org. For more information, email cfperspectives@gmail.com

Do you have questions?

Get a brochure from the bulletin board at the back of the Welcome Center. Contact the local coordinators at cfperspectives@gmail.com or talk to alumni from this church (Jan Benson, Jerry Bernard, Lisa Congdon, Rus & Tony DeBonis, Jan Hoover, Janet Williams). It's a fascinating class that will change your life.



Kids' Christmas Program December 11 @ 9:45

Our annual extravaganza of music and joy will take place during the Sunday School hour on Sunday, December 11. Come and see it in the sanctuary! The younger children will be performing classic Christmas songs and our 5th and 6th graders will take us through the story of Jesus' birth. Gathering music will be provided by our young musicians. If your child would like to perform a song, please contact Jenna Engel at jenna.engel@aboutfirst.com

A few notes on Sunday school:

- We will not be having Children's Sunday school on **Dec. 25th & Jan. 1st**. Sunday School will start back up on Jan. 8th.
- The **Nursery** will be closed on Dec. 25th & Jan. 1st.
- **Filling Station:** Thank you to everyone that donated cooked and served at the filling station this semester. The last Filling Station for this semester will be Dec. 7th. If you, would like to bring a dish please let Jenna Engel know. Filling Station will start back up on Wednesday, Jan 11th.
- **B.L.A.S.T.:** Thank you to all the kids for coming every week to BLAST. This semester has been fun because of all of you! Thank you to all of the volunteers who are able to help on Wednesday night. B.L.A.S.T. would not be possible if you did not give your time. Everything you do is greatly appreciated! The last night of B.L.A.S.T for the fall semester is Dec. 7th. We will start back up on Wednesday, Jan 11th.
- **3rd Grade Family Bible Class:** We are so excited to start the Family Bible class, which will be a five week course that will meet from 9:45 a.m. – 10:45. This will be held in the Parlor. In the class you and your child will learn how to use the Bible together.
- **Thank you** to all who helped get our church "dressed up" for Christmas! With all the volunteers we were able to complete the Christmas decorating in one afternoon. This has to be a record! Remember that Christmas is our Open House to the community. Many come to church seeking to find the real Spirit of Christmas. Please welcome them, and make them feel at home. Let Christ's Light Shine!

Prayer Ministry

The Prayer Ministry Team invites you this season of Advent, to be intentional about making time to pause, listen, and look. Make room for hope. Take a few moments each day to be quiet and to wait in expectation. Listen to a favorite carol and really imagine what it would be like to be there when God came near in the form of a baby boy. Look around and try to truly see others. Can you bring someone joy or peace today in some simple way?

Pause.

Listen.

Look.

Find the miracles all around you this Christmas.

From: "God Came Near" by Max Lucado



A Good, Old-Fashioned Church Potluck!

The last Filling Station meal of the year is December 7, and it will be a good, old-fashioned church potluck. Help us serve up a bunch of edible Christmas cheer by bringing a dish to share. We'll eat anything, but will be especially in need of hot and cold side dishes. Jenna wants to be sure that we don't all bring lutefisk, so tell her what you're planning. No time to cook? Grab a bag of chips or a veggie tray and come anyway. No time to shop? Don't let that keep you from coming, either.

After December 7, the Filling Station will be taking a few weeks off, but will be back on January 11 to start our spring semester.

A Blessing to Someone Today

Love In The Name of Christ (Love INC) pools the strengths of area churches to reach out to those in need - our church is one of 23. People in need will often approach a church for assistance. Unfortunately, many churches are not equipped to meet the variety of needs that are presented. That's not a failure of the churches - at their core, they are faith organizations, not relief agencies.

But, the Christian imperative is to help. Love INC works like this: when someone approaches a member church for assistance, they are referred to Love INC. Love INC staff then conducts an interview to fully determine the need, and which church is best able to assist. This allows churches to specialize in their area of expertise: food, infant supplies, transportation, moving assistance, rent and utility assistance, home maintenance and yard work and more.

You can be a blessing to someone today by volunteering with LoveINC.

Clearinghouse Intake Volunteers

Intake volunteers connect with our clients on the phone and set up appointments at our local churches. We have openings for volunteers on Monday afternoons 12-2 or Fridays 9-12. Love INC office is in Cedar Falls and is a safe place to work.

Clearinghouse Reception Volunteer

Receptionists answer the phone during Clearinghouse hours on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays from 9-12. Substitute receptionists are needed.

Delivery Volunteers

DVs deliver food, baby items or kitchen essentials to our clients who don't have transportation of their own. Opportunities are available on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon. Volunteers are expected to make deliveries on their scheduled day every other week.

If you're interested in volunteering with Love INC, check out their website at www.loveincv.org or give them a call at 266-1264.

Our Advent Mission Focus: Heifer International

Check out the Heifer International display in the Gathering Place for opportunities to give a gift that keeps on giving for generations to come. We'll be taking orders for chicks, goats, cows, pigs, water buffalo, and other animals each Sunday morning until the New Year (or stop by the church office during the week). And, best of all, you don't have to take them home, feed them, clean up after them, or even wrap them! Get a llama for your mama, a chick for your chick, a kid for your kid, a bunny for your honey, or a goat for your old goat.

The Fill the Ark Giving Calendar is perfect for the four weeks of Advent. Fill the Ark is a daily missions-giving program that spans four weeks. It offers real-life solutions to world hunger and shows that one person, one family or one congregation can make a difference in today's world. As you or your family fills a Giving Bank with money you've saved, you'll learn how your gifts can share God's love and end hunger and poverty around the world. And maybe you'll have some fun, too. What a great way to count down the days until Christmas. Pick up a Giving Calendar and a bank at the Heifer display in the Gathering Place.



The Ark is Almost Full!

We had a great response for funds to put camels in the ark - Millie the camel is waiting patiently for her fella to join her once we collect \$230 more.

Once our gentleman camel is loaded we will be very close to having a pair of each animal, and we are confident that this amount will be raised in December. \$5000 is what it takes to Fill the Ark, and we are practically there. Thank you for your support with the project this year. Your gifts will be used to help others, who in turn will pass on the gift through the offspring of the animals that your funds provide. Give the gift that keeps on giving.



Stained Glass Nativities - Auction to Support Missions

Blue, Green or Purple! This year we have three simple, yet elegant stained glass nativities to choose from. You have until 11:00am on Sunday, December 18 to bid on the color of your choice. Check them out - they are on display on the Welcome Center - and place your bid on the appropriate colored bid-sheet. Highest bidders can designate the proceeds to go to Banyam Theological Seminary, Red Bird Mission, or the NE Iowa Food Bank. Nativities stand about 8" high on a circular glass base.

Christmas offering

Our Rainbow Task Force has selected the projects for this year's Christmas offering. Your special gift will be shared among these mission opportunities to help them give their best to help others: Community Meal, House of Hope, Banyam Theological Seminary and a well project at a secondary school in Nigeria. Look for more details in the Christmas letter in your mailbox in mid-December, and use the special offering envelope to support these ministries. You may place your gift in the Sunday offering plate or send it to the church office at any time. We will not be taking an offering during our Christmas Eve services, but there will be offering plates set at the entrances of our Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall to receive your gift for missions.

Neighbor Helping Neighbor offering

On December 18 we will be taking a "Neighbor Helping Neighbor" offering. Funds collected are used in Iowa to help other Iowans who have unmet needs due to economic hardship.

The NE Iowa Food Bank is looking for Talent!

Talent? What kind of talent? We are glad you asked! All kinds of talent is appreciated, and honestly, I think you can handle it. Chris Madigan (a talent recruiter with the Food Bank) says they can always use help with these tasks:

- Driving - a Class D license is required for the big trucks, but your standard driver's license is good for a couple of their vehicles.
- Riding - just ride along with the driver and help with the loading and unloading.
- Office - mailings, design work, sometimes some help at reception up front.
- Warehouse - pull orders and load and unload trucks
- Sorting - sort through donations. This is a relaxed paced volunteer job, but crucial.
- Pantry - help clients shop, restock the shelves, and weigh carts of food.
- Onsite Kitchen - help cook and serve anywhere from 400-600 kids a day.

If you have questions about these opportunities, contact Chris Madigan at the Food Bank at 235-0507 ext 113 or cmadigan@feedingamerica.org

Wee Care - Great News!

Good news! We were approved for a grant through the NE District Office to supplement our WeeCare ministry in 2017. We can still use your support, but it's good to know that additional funds will be available to help next year.

Grateful parents of wee ones come to our church every Tuesday afternoon to pick up a supply of much needed baby goods. This gap ministry through LoveINC helps struggling families stretch their dollars. Diapers of all sizes are always appreciated, along with wipes, baby wash, baby lotion, 8 oz bottles and sippy cups. If you see a good deal on end-of-season baby clothes feel free to bring them in. We have a place to store them until the appropriate season.

On-Going Wish Lists

For those who like to shop, we have an opportunity for you! There are several in-church groups that can always use supplies to support their ministries. For your convenience, we have compiled the wish lists for Wee Care, UMCOR School Kits, FirstKids Daycare & Preschool, and Sunday School all on one sheet. And, we have also compiled a list of items that you may have at home that could be repurposed for another use by Lincoln School, our Cardmakers, and River Hills School.

Pick up the Wish Lists sheet on the literature rack outside the church office, or at the donation collection site in the little hallway near the drinking fountain on the main level of the church.

Be A Reading Buddy

Our First UMC Reading Buddies began going to Lincoln School in mid-October, and both the students and the grown-ups are having a good time. Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade students are given opportunities to read with an adult volunteer from our church. About 35 times each week someone from our congregation is at our neighborhood school to support the students and teachers to promote literacy and learning.

If you are interested in being a Reading Buddy, sign up on the clipboard at the Change a Child Story display or talk to Lisa in the church office. It's not too late to join, and we promise that you will find it a blessing.

email Prayer Chain

If you would like to be on the church "eprayer" list, please let the church office know by emailing Lisa at lisa.congdon@aboutfirst.com. We send out prayer requests by email as they come in, and also include prayer requests noted on the attendance slips. Remember, to ensure privacy, please make sure to get permission from the party that you feel needs prayers.

Got extra fabric? Bring it in!

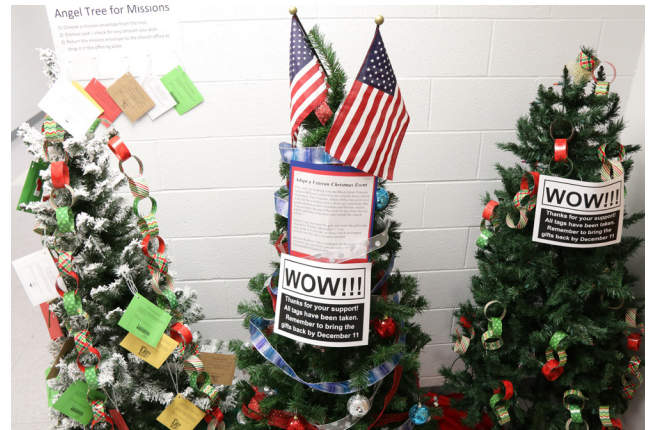
Along with the supplies to fill the school kits, there is also a need for fabric to make the school bags and other stitching projects. The Quilters & Stitchers are looking for durable material for school bags, 3+ yards of cotton material for sewing kits, and flannel, fleece, and quilting materials for various other uses. There is a designated bin for your fabric donations in the church collection site on the main level in the little hall across from the drinking fountain.

Angel Trees- WOW! Tags are almost gone

This year we partnered with Lincoln School and North Cedar School to share a little Christmas love to some families in our own community. The school guidance counselors provided us with a wish list for families from each school. The tags were placed on the tree in mid November and were quickly selected by church members.

In addition, Benson Redfern coordinated a tree to assist a local veteran and family this Christmas. Those tags were also quickly taken by generous church members.

If you missed out on getting a tag from those two trees, you may choose a tag to support one of our other ministries such as WeeCare, Bibles for our sisters in Mitchellville, books for kids through Change a Child's Story, or the NE Iowa Food Bank.



Congregational Care Team Thanks

We want to take this opportunity to thank all those in our church family who have been caring for others in one way or another during the past year. We have individuals in the areas of grief support, Stephen Ministry, affirmation, nursing home visitation, 80+ birthday roses, and the Cedar Falls Healthcare Center birthday party. We thank all the volunteers who have so lovingly given many hours for these ministries. We also thank all members who quietly care for others in their own ways. You are showing others the face of Christ each time you send a card, say a prayer, visit someone who is home bound, or extend a helping hand. May God bless you this Christmas season!

Gift Wrapping for the Food Bank-new location

The Northeast Iowa Food Bank will be offering a gift wrapping service to shoppers during the holidays as a way to collect free-will donations. Every dollar they collect provides up to 4 meals for families. Get your Sunday School class, small group, or family together to help wrap gifts at their NEW LOCATION at 319 Main Street, Cedar Falls. Bring your own gifts to wrap if you like, or do a bit of shopping or dining before or after your shift. Sign up on the clipboard at the Welcome Center for one of these four shifts in December:

Saturday Dec 17.... 3:00-5:00
Monday Dec 19....5:00-7:00
Wednesday Dec 21....1:00-3:00
Friday Dec 23.... 1:00-3:00

UPDATE Thanksgiving Church Challenge for the Food Bank

Thank you for your great support of the Thanksgiving Church Challenge for the Food Bank. We collected over \$1,175, and sent five big boxes of canned vegetables, stuffing, side dishes, and desserts to the Food Bank. Great job!

UPDATE Crop Walk

We were close to having the pair of Golden Shoes this year, but needed four more walkers to pass our closest competitor, Nazareth Lutheran. We tallied 39 walkers to their 42. So they keep the Golden Shoe for walkers, but preliminary reports show that we will keep our Golden Shoe for amount of funds raised. Thank you for your support for CROP Walk.

UPDATE - Ingathering

A big thank you to all!

You may have donated items for a school kit or a layette. Maybe, you were one of the quilters that helped stitch a beautiful quilt. Some of you donated money to the "Bag Lady" to help with shipping. You could have been at Lincoln School on Saturday helping to pack boxes and load the truck. Were you one of the prayer warriors that support the fundamental integrity of our mission efforts?

Our church supplied 99 health kits, 22 sewing kits, 610 school kits, 33 layettes and 74 baby jackets. We also contributed quilts for the auction, baked goods for the bake sale, items for the bazaar and workers all over the place! Our financials totaled \$14,934 in cash and \$10,443 in kind donations!

We thank each one of you for making the 37th Annual Thanksgiving Ingathering a success!

Sincerely,

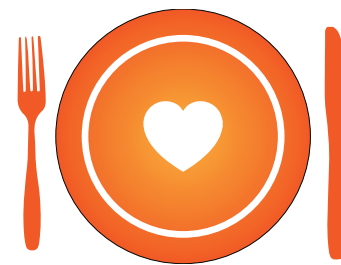
Kris Rash and Jan Benson
Cedar Falls Site Co-chairs

UPDATE - Change a Child's Story

Thank you for your continued support of "Change a Child's Story". Remember, your generous donations are doubled, and funds are used to provide books for students and teachers at Lincoln Elementary School. We have about 25 faithful Reading Buddies who spend time each week reading with students. It's one-on-one time with some delightful young folk, and everyone benefits from it. Let Lisa know if you want to join in on the fun.

UPDATE - Women at the Well

Thank you for your donations of funds to provide Bibles for our sisters in the Iowa Correctional Facility for Women in Mitchellville. This month we will be sending another 20 Bibles to our sisters in prison. It only costs about \$10 to provide a Bible. As you plan your Christmas gift giving, consider giving the gift of God's Word to a sister who needs a little hope in her life.



Community Meal

This is a great ministry of feeding and fellowship and you can be a part of it. Once a month - the fourth Tuesday - we plan, prepare, and serve the meal. Meals are served from 4:30-6:00, and the prep work begins early afternoon. If you would like to help with meal preparation or serving, contact Jan Benson. We can use donations of desserts, too. We welcome new faces. There are opportunities for everyone.

Remember, while our team only serves on the fourth Tuesday, other churches are here cooking and serving every other Tuesday of the month. You're always welcome to come and eat - the community meal is completely free and open to everyone.

Food Bank-every month

Our crew helps at the Food Bank the first Tuesday of each month, from 6:00 to 8:00pm. We're their "A" Team - they love to see the Methodists come to work. Would you like to be on the reminder email or do you want to know more? Contact Lisa in the church office. lisa.congdon@aboutfirst.com

Go

Do you have an idea for a church mission for work, learning or evangelism?

Contact Lisa Congdon in the church office and share your ideas. There may be ways that the church can help you realize your mission vision.





Now Hear This

Here's some help for those who find it difficult to hear in the sanctuary. We're equipped with a set of listening-assistance devices. They are little radios that pick up the pastor's microphones and amplify the signal for you. The radios plug into an earpiece, or you may bring your own headphones (standard mini-plug). Also, those with telephone-enabled hearing aids may request a wire "necklace" that transmits the signal directly into the hearing aid - no headphones necessary! If you'd like to try one of these devices, ask an usher and they will get one for you and show you how to use it.

Fellas @ First

Men's Tuesday Breakfast

Men's Breakfast Fellowship meets at the Cedar Falls Family Restaurant in North Cedar, Tuesday mornings at 7:00. The devotional is rotated among attendees. We usually finish before eight o'clock. Start your Tuesdays with us. Contact: Tim Houts and Steve Williams.

Tuesday Night Fellas

Informal. Friendly. Our studies are intended to help us figure out how to bring out the best in ourselves and draw us closer to God and each other. Hang out with us in the man-cave (room 059) on Tuesday nights from 6:30 - 8:00. All men of any age are welcome and invited. We usually have a video study going. Don't worry - we don't assign homework.

Women @ First

PURPOSE: The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, to develop a creative, supportive fellowship, and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

In December we will meet for the United Methodist Women's Christmas Luncheon. This will be held on Dec. 8, 2016, in Fellowship Hall. The luncheon will start at 11:30 and the program will begin at 12:30. We are very fortunate to have the 5th and 6th Grade Choir from Lincoln School come once again to sing for us. Following their presentation will be the installation of officers for the 2017 year by Steve Williams.

We are happy that the church staff will be among our special guests and that several men from the church will serve our meal as they have done in past years.

Reservations are needed for this luncheon. Notify your circle chair if you plan to come. The cost of the luncheon is \$7.00. We hope you can come celebrate with us!

December UMW meetings

Dec. 5 - Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Library

Dec. 8 - Unit Meeting, Christmas Luncheon, 11:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Dec. 13 - Miriam Circle, 1:30 p.m., Library

More Than Moms

Attention all tired and stressed out women! There is a place for you on Wednesday nights to give you joy and rejuvenation. Join us in the Parlor from 6 - 7pm for a time of renewal, relaxation and fellowship (child care provided.)

We have officially changed our name from Mommy Maintenance to More than Moms. This is a perfect description for the women of the group as individuals and as a collective body, since many come that don't have kids!

Invite a friend . . . all are welcome!

Any questions, please contact Lesley Toma at (319) 266-1713 or lesleytoma@aboutfirst.com



"Aurora Borealis"

A Mission Memoir by Art & Cora Guillermo

Cora and I were long time members of First UMC when we lived in Cedar Falls. Cedar Falls First UMC supported us through years of volunteer service in Alaska. We so enjoyed our experiences of discipleship that we wrote them in a book entitled "Aurora Borealis. Christian Witness in Alaska." This is our testimony of how retired educators were sent by God to share the Good News to our kababayans (compatriots) in Alaska. The book is available for \$14.95 plus \$2.69 SH. Heartland Promotions, 1703 A Linden Dr. Fairfield, Ia. 52556

Thank yous

Thank you so much for the beautiful rose, another great visit from Jane, and the lovely card from my church family.

Winnie Clayton

We want to thank the Rake and Run crew for the surprise and raking our leaves. It looks real nice and we appreciated their hard work very much. What a thoughtful church we belong to...always caring for others.

Dorothy & Jim Schwab

Thank you for the lovely rose that Jane brought to me for my birthday from the First United Methodist Church. It's beauty reminded me daily of the love extended to all of us as we add years to our lives. Thanks for such a caring gesture.

Lois Hansen

I waited 80 years to get a rose from Jane, and when she delivered it I wasn't home. Dang it! I want Jane to know how much I appreciate all the time she devotes to this very thoughtful example of friendship. Thank you Jane. And, thanks to the staff for the card.

Bud Stock

Thank you for all the prayers and concerns, Flo and Pastor Matt's calls, cards, and the comfort quilt, during Don's illness. A special thank you to Pastor Steve for his many visits, and the touching and lovely funeral service. I am thankful to be a member of such a caring church family.

Elaine Chapman and family

I had a lovely birthday on November 13 - church in the morning, a day with our Des Moines daughter, Jane, and a visit from our "rose" lady Jane in the afternoon. Many cards from church friends and staff were so appreciated. And, good news about Bill's latest cancer test were best of all. God is good!

Donna Mincks

It was nice to be remembered on my 80th birthday. Thanks to Jane for the beautiful red rose and the visit. Also, a thanks to the staff for the card.

George Wagner

A big thank you to Carol Dick for bringing the lovely quilt to my husband, Clarence. Casey enjoyed her visit and she brought some cheer to our day. Thank to the quilters for their thoughtfulness. It is appreciated.

Ruth Tucker

Sympathy to:

- Family and friends of Joyce Borglum. Joyce passed away November 5. Her service was held November 9.
- Family and friends of Don Chapman. Don passed away November 6. His service was held November 10.
- The Bernard family on the loss of Jerry's sister, Eileen Stevenson, on November 20.
- Lisa Benson and her family on the loss of her father on November 23.
- Dee Behr and her family on the loss of her mother, Marilyn Underwood, on Thanksgiving Day.

Congratulations:

We had two weddings in October! Congratulations to these newlyweds:

- Tim and Sami (Moore) Steffensmeier, married October 8.
- Tim and Kassidi (Braby) Poots, married October 22

Congratulations to Crystal and Heath Wilken on the arrival of a new baby girl. Amelia Ann Wilken was born November 15. Big sister Lily welcomed her home.

Welcome:

Natalie Sue Powers was baptized in our church on November 13. She is the daughter of Bill and Amy Powers.

Hospital reminder

Please call us, or have a family member or friend call us, if you are hospitalized. The hospitals are not able to contact us to give us this information. We want to support you and your family when illness or surgeries happen, but cannot do so if we are unaware.

Altar Flowers

The altar flower calendar for 2017 is at the Welcome Center. Sign up now to recognize a special date or to honor a loved one with flowers for the altar. Have the flowers delivered to the church on Friday, please.

Join Up!

We're glad you're here! Want to make it official and join First UMC? Contact our Family Ministries Coordinator, Lesley Toma, at lesley.toma@aboutfirst.com.

Attendance- week ending

	11/6	11/13	11/20	11/27
FUSION (Wed)	39	25	25	x
Transformation	103	102	106	96
Traditional 8:30	176	151	173	109
Traditional 11:00	109	115	155	103

First United Methodist Church

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Sunday, 8:30 & 11:00 a.m. Traditional services

Sunday, 8:30 a.m. Transformation Worship

Van rides are available for the 10:00 Sunday service.

Child care is provided in the nursery for infants and babies for Sunday Services.

Spreading the Word

If you miss a Sunday, or want to hear a message again, find us on the local Public Access cable television channels. If you are unable to receive the television broadcast, weekly dvds are also available, or find the video links for sermons at www.aboutfirst.com

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

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

Our Pastors

Steve Williams, Senior Pastor, steve.williams@aboutfirst.com

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

Staff (in alphabetical order)

Sam Barr, Transformation Music Coordinator

Dee Behr, Parish Visitor
dee.behr@aboutfirst.com

John Bentley, Head Custodian

Deb Bernard, Financial Manager
deb.bernard@aboutfirst.com

Chris Congdon, Media Coordinator
chris.congdon@aboutfirst.com

Lisa Congdon, Office Ministry Coordinator
lisa.congdon@aboutfirst.com

Jenna Engel, Christian Education Coordinator
jenna.engel@aboutfirst.com

Bryan Houts, Chancel Choir Director
bryan.houts@aboutfirst.com

Flo Moblely, Parish Visitor

Rebecca Nims, Youth Ministry Coordinator
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Doug Shaffer, Organist
musicman52151@gmail.com
610-4249

Emily Terpstra, Custodian

Lesley Toma, Family Ministries Coordinator
lesley.toma@aboutfirst.com

January newsletter deadline is December 20.

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