

December 2021

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Worship Sundays at 10:30 AM Mabaan at 12:30 PM

## Church on a Mission



With your support, each month First Church provides evening meals for the CFUM Supper Club and Central Iowa Shelter and a lunch for the Connection Café, averaging upwards of 350 meals a month. Volunteers are, of course, essential to making this happen, but it could not be done without funds to cover the cost of food which has steadily

increased. We rely heavily upon donations from our members and friends which are used first, but we also include an amount in the Outreach budget to supplement donations as needed. While it is not always expended thanks to your generosity, last year we allocated \$2,000 for these meals.

## Alternative Gift Mart

Our Alternative Gift Mart has become an annual tradition with gifts that give back.

During the month of December, members of the Outreach Committee will have a table set up in Fellowship Hall so you may purchase your Alternative Christmas Gifts. You can select from the CFUM Supper Club meals (Trinity), the Food Bank of Iowa Backpack Buddies Program that provides nutritionally balanced food to children over the weekend, and Heifer International shares of a goat, water buffalo, honey bees or a biogas stove.

During after church coffee, stop by the table and make your purchase. You may also purchase gifts online on the church website.

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## Supper Club 2022

Thanks to your support, First Church has been able to provide an evening meal for Children & Family Urban Movement's Supper Club once a month for the past 23 years. As the meal coordinator, I have enjoyed working alongside you and greatly appreciate the financial support for this ministry which serves the ethnically diverse north side neighborhood surrounding Trinity UMC at 8<sup>th</sup> & College. We serve an average of 100-125 people of all ages, but many are young children attending Moulton Elementary and their families, as well as low income or unemployed persons living in the neighborhood who thank you as well.

Since April of 2020, we have been preparing and packaging 100 or 125 to-go meals each month. CFUM has given no indication of when they may return to serving meals in the church due to ventilation issues so, for now, we will continue preparing and packaging meals and no servers are needed, but recognizing that could change at any time. Under this arrangement, it works most efficiently when we have at least four people to help with each meal and so we will continue to need a solid core of volunteers.

Each year at this time, I recruit volunteers to help with these meals on the third Friday of each month during the coming year. Under the present situation, we generally begin preparation in our kitchen about 12:30 p.m. but that can vary throughout the year based upon when we need to have the meals delivered. If you would like to be part of this ministry and help prepare these meals, please let me know by calling 276-3112 or e-mail [shirley.christoffersen@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:shirley.christoffersen@dnr.iowa.gov) during December. Our first meal of the new year will be January 21, weather permitting, so I will be preparing a volunteer schedule after the first of the year and will contact you to learn what dates may best fit into your plans.

I am also taking this opportunity to ask you to consider a donation for meal expenses which are kept in a special fund designated solely for the Supper Club. While gifts can be made throughout the year, I use this time to make an annual appeal. Donations should be made payable to First Church and designated for the Supper Club. This ministry will also be a giving option in our Alternative Gift Mart. Again, thank you, your support is vital to continuing this ministry . . . we cannot do it without you!

Shirley Christoffersen,  
CFUM Supper Club Meal Coordinator

# CHRISTMAS

## Offering



The joy and hope of Christmas renews our spirit and opens our hearts once again to the awesome power of God working through everyday people. When we cannot be there, our gifts support the vital work of the church, together making a difference. This year's Christmas offering will be shared between UMCOR's United States Disaster Response Advance and Hawthorn Hill Ministries, a local mission for homeless families with children here in Des Moines. Gifts can be made on-line or by check payable to First Church and designated for the Christmas offering.

When responding to a disaster in the United States, UMCOR works with the affected conference to provide financial assistance, expertise and networking. UMCOR and its partners are responding to disasters every day, with 100% of donations going directly as designated. During 2021, these are just some of the disaster recoveries that were assisted: Hurricane Ida, flash flooding in Tennessee, tropical storm/Hurricane Henri, tropical storm Fred, wildfires in the West, surfside condo collapse in Florida, severe weather in Southeast and winter storms in Texas. When disasters happen, it is local churches that provide the first response to their communities and that basic understanding forms the foundation of UMCOR's United States disaster training and response efforts.

Hawthorn Hill Ministries encompasses the New Directions Shelter and Home Connection. New Directions Shelter provides free, temporary emergency shelter and services for approximately 105-130 homeless families every year. It is one of only three shelters for families in the Des Moines metro area providing eight private bedrooms, balanced meals and laundry services. These services are offered in a friendly environment emphasizing dignity and respect for others. The Home Connection pioneered supportive housing in the Des Moines area and is the only program with 29 housing units located in various Des Moines neighborhoods, enabling them to serve 40+ families each year. Their goal is to move families with children to permanent housing with an emphasis on financial independence. Families stay in the program for approximately two to four years. To be eligible, at least one adult must be working or seeking employment and parents must be involved in their children's education and development and volunteer in the community.

IOWA CONFERENCE *of the* UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

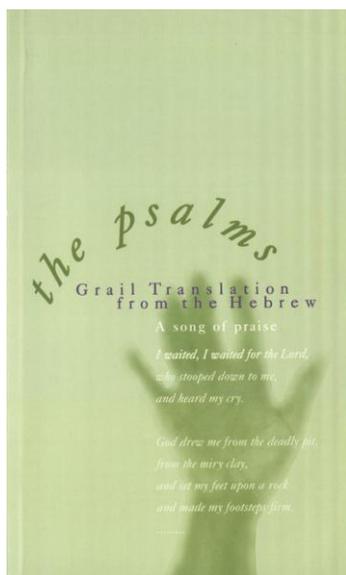
# Ingathering



## Mission Ingathering Report

On November 6 we delivered 68 kits to the Mission Ingathering valued at \$928 along with \$545 cash for shipping and other supplies for a total donation of \$1,473. Our gifts were part of the \$483,778.37 in monetary and in-kind donations received on that day. Thousands of people, in communities near and far, will benefit from the work done across Iowa to make this event a success!

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### **the psalms: Grail Translation from the Hebrew** **(book)**

Kevin LaGree is looking for copies of the psalms: Grail Translation from the Hebrew. A number of years ago Kevin used this book to teach a class on the Psalms.

The book is out of print and if you have a copy you would be willing to sell back to Kevin, please let Christine know at [discipleship@dmfirstchurch.org](mailto:discipleship@dmfirstchurch.org) or 515-244-6209.

## "Jesus as a Refugee"

By Edgar F. Solís



### FUMC Anti-racism Task Force

According to the American Immigration Council, refugee flows are increasing worldwide. Given the rising numbers of forcibly displaced people in general, it is not surprising that the number of refugees is increasing. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 26.3 million refugees worldwide in 2020, up from 15.2 million in 2010. Children under the age of 18 represent roughly half of the refugee population.

Under U.S. law, a "refugee" is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of a "well-founded fear of persecution" due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.

The international definition of a "refugee" encompasses only a subset of the entire population of forcibly displaced individuals. Individuals who are not defined as "refugees" may be forced to leave their homes for reasons other than "a well-founded fear of persecution," such as resource scarcity and extreme weather events. For instance, as of 2020, there were 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad who did not qualify as either refugees or asylum seekers.

The State Department and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are the primary agencies that assess the viability of different refugee populations for admission, as well as the capacity of U.S. government officials to process them. The President, in consultation with Congress, determines the numerical ceiling for refugee admissions each year. For FY (Fiscal Year) 2020, the ceiling was set at an all-time low of 18,000, down from the previous all-time low of 30,000 set in FY 2019. This low ceiling was not reached in FY 2020 partly because the refugee resettlement program was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Of the 11,814 refugees who were resettled in the United States during FY 2020, the largest share was from Africa, followed by Europe, East Asia, the Near East/South Asia, and Latin America/Caribbean.

With all this information, it is crucial to remember that immigration is a constant factor that can bring many opportunities to express God's love to people.

We are close to the Christmas season and it is essential to remember that the "Word became flesh" and dwelt among us as a child. God arrives as an infant who has nowhere to lay his head and must spend his first vulnerable days of life not in a home or a hospital, like many of us, but in an improvised, makeshift shelter. The Gospel tells us that God arrived as part of a family who must hurriedly flee a campaign of terror (the "slaughter of the innocents" ordered by a cruel and terrible political figure, King Herod) into a foreign country. The Holy Family experienced a desperate and challenging flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). Jesus was a refugee and as such, he called his followers to show mercy and express the love of God by serving "the least of these," "feeding the hungry," "clothing the naked," and in particular "welcoming the stranger" (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus explicitly takes up solidarity with those who need the basics of food, clothing, and shelter in this parable, as if to say, "If you're looking for me, you'll find me among the most vulnerable among us." Today is the day where we can open our hearts and minds to find ways to serve refugees. During this Advent season, First Church members will have the opportunity to assist refugee families coming to Iowa. Please read the article on the next page to see how you can help.



**REFUGEE ASSISTANCE**

## Ways You Can Help Refugees

### Just Imagine. . .



Close your eyes and imagine for just a moment you have to leave your home with nothing more than the clothes on your back. You are then flown to a place where you don't know anyone, you don't speak the language and the customs seem strange. That is the situation faced by many refugees. The Outreach Committee at First Church has been in contact with Catholic Charities here in Des Moines. They are one of two organizations in the state currently helping with the resettlement of refugees, many of them from Afghanistan. In a recent 20 day period, they had to begin the resettlement process for 111 refugees. They are in need of our help. During this Advent season we have offered to help in the following ways:

1. We will collect household items (towels, sheets, blankets, dishes, pots and pans, silverware, etc). These items do not need to be new but they must be in good shape. Please don't donate items that are worn and should be tossed.
2. We will collect personal hygiene items (deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene products, diapers, etc.)
3. They are currently in desperate need of sofas and dining room tables and chairs. If you have either of these items, please let Christine know. Catholic Charities will pick them up.

Each Sunday of Advent (December 5, 12, and 19) we will be collecting items. Please bring them to church and take them to the collection location in the church library.

By donating, you can be a blessing to those who have just arrived in our state and are hoping to begin a new life. Thank you!



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**DEADLINE FOR FUTURE LIGHT ISSUES IS THE 20<sup>TH</sup> OF EACH MONTH**

Worship ~ We Welcome and Affirm Everyone  
*First Church - A Reconciling Congregation*

*First United Methodist Church, at the top of 10<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Des Moines, strives to love others as Christ loves us and, in doing so, to be the Body of Christ in word and deed.*

*As the Body of Christ, we welcome and affirm all of God's children, knowing that each is created in the image of God. We welcome and affirm people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, races, ethnicities, family configurations, and physical and mental capabilities to join us in full participation as we come together to worship God and then go out to share God's love in the world around us.*



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