

DECORAH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Photo by Kathy Johnson, Taken from DFUMC kitchen window

JANUARY 2026

The Tower

Welcome to January.

The beginning of a new year.

Each year, I am asked what my new year's resolutions are. I don't have any. What I do have are habits that I wish to incorporate into my life. I am trying to get a better handle on my health and diet. I found it surprising that when I began this journey back in October with a nutritionist/dietician, the first questions weren't about what I typically eat, but how is your sleep, and how are your stress levels.



Continued on next page



As I have continued my work throughout the end of the year and beginning a new year, I have learned that making these grand resolutions and changes are okay, but we need to start smaller and work our way towards those goals. Set up small habits you can work on and don't make the large changes all at once. If you do, it will feel more like an obligation than something you want to do. I think that is why all my previous resolutions and those of many others often fail after a couple of weeks. Too large of changes at too rapid a pace.

For example, one of my discussions with my nutritionist involved me stating that I am going to cut out all fast food. Instead, she suggested that I find simple and quick meals that could be ready in a few minutes with minimal effort for those times I don't feel like cooking. And that I pick out one or two go to meals at the available restaurants in the area to help with decision fatigue, which is most likely the culprit, at these times of just wanting to stop and get takeout.

Point is, new year's is a great time to consider change, but don't feel pressured to make big sweeping changes all at once just because it is the new year. Small changes over time can be, and I have found are, more effective over the long haul. No matter what, whether you have resolutions or not, you are loved and you do not walk this journey alone. God loves you and we, the church family, love you too.

Be true to yourself and don't let others tell you who you should be or how to get where you want to be.

Happy New Year!
Rev. Cat Stokes

From Syd: UWFaith Meeting:

Wednesday, January 7

12:15 Executive meeting

1:00 General meeting

Program will be planning for

2026

Mat weaving :

- **Wednesday, January 7th**
- **Wednesday, January 21st**

10:00 - 12:00

Quilting group:

Please watch for schedule.





BOOK CLUB

DETAILS FOR THIS MONTH

For the month of January 2026, the FUMC Book Club will be reading *West With Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge.

We will be gathering on **Thursday January 15** at 1:30 pm. at Cheryl Pellett's home. Her home is located at **302 Leif Erikson Drive** in Decorah. If you would like to join us please contact Jane Hardy for further information at **563-382-5316** or **jhardy3333@aol.com**.

-Jane Hardy

Birthdays

January 1: Connie Bergstrom

January 10: Alison Bishop

January 12: Pat Downs, Jorja Folkedahl

January 13: Abby Northup

January 15: Ethan Folkedahl

January 17: Sharon Folkedahl

January 22: Ann Duder

January 23: Jim Rhodes

January 24: Janis Mineart

January 28: Jan Heikes

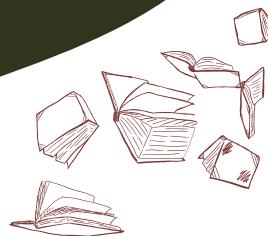
January 29: Kristy Gould, Sally Stromseth

January 21: Sherr Schilling

BOOK STUDY

2025 - 2026

From Pastor Cat



MEETING DATES

January 4 and 18 –
chapters 4, 5 and
possibly chapter 6

February 1 and 22 –
chapters 7 and
chapter 8 (one chapter
each week)

March 8 and 22 –
chapter 9 and chapter
10 (one chapter each
week)

April 12 and 26 –
chapter 11 and chapter
12 (one chapter each
week)

May 3 and 17 – chapter
13 and chapter 14 (one
chapter each week)

I am currently in a climate change cohort for the year, and I am taking you along with me. This year, our church is on a journey to look at climate change through a lens of faith and what we can do to affect change and provide care for all of creation. Our book/Bible study this year will start in November, and we will be meeting after coffee twice a month to look at responses that people from various backgrounds have looked at the question: *Do we have a moral obligation to take action to protect the future of a planet in peril?*

Each meeting we will look at various responses from a variety of people and hopefully through our discussion come to our own answer to this question. There are also suggestions on how to take action at the end of each chapter. The books are available on Amazon in various formats and range in price from \$8.99 (paperback, 2011) to 12.05 (hardcover). As of the writing of this article you can get a kindle version for \$9.99.

The book is entitled:

Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril,
edited by Kathleen Moore and Michael Nelson.

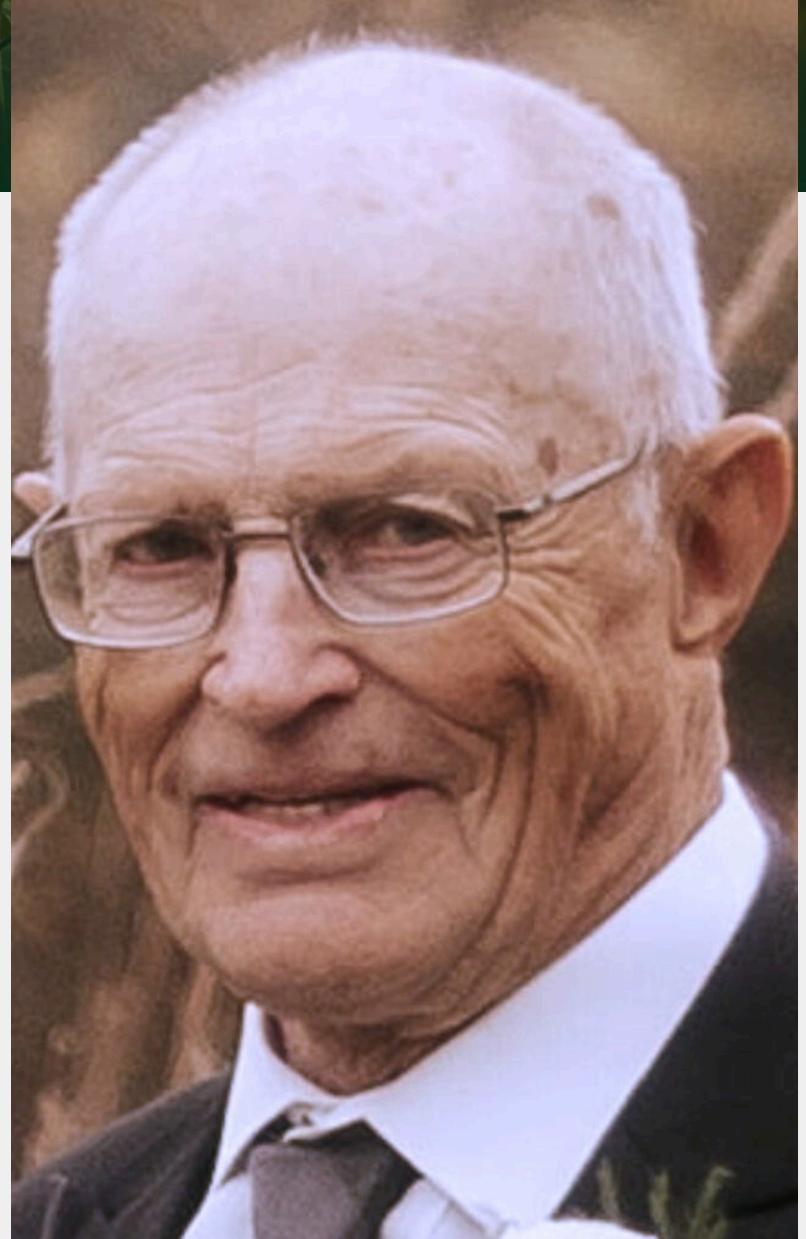


FROM THE FAMILY OF
Gerald Leidahl

Thank you to the women
and men of the UWF for all
of their work in servicing
the funeral lunch.

We are appreciative of the
food brought in, cards,
telephone calls, flowers,
and memorials.

Your kindness at this time
as we mourn the loss of
Gerald will always be
remembered.





VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Home Visits **A message from Pastor Cat:**

As you might recall, in 2025, it was my turn through the Annual conference to complete my Safe Gatherings training and background check. While going through the training, I discovered that I am supposed to have another person go with me on visits so there are always two adults doing visits to provide a safe environment for all involved. With that in mind, and with guidance from our District Superintendent, I am creating a list of volunteers who are able to join me on visits to our homebound members. I break up the visits into two days a month. Ideally, we would have enough people signing up and being willing to join me so that the volunteers would go on visits two to three times a year and not have it be a large commitment on time. I have visits scheduled for **Thursdays** mostly on our calendar, but this is not set in stone, and I am flexible on days and times for visits. I could work within your schedule. I currently have a few volunteers but am always looking for more.

Update: Starting this month (January) I will begin calling those who have put their name on the list to start up with visitations.



Holy Bible

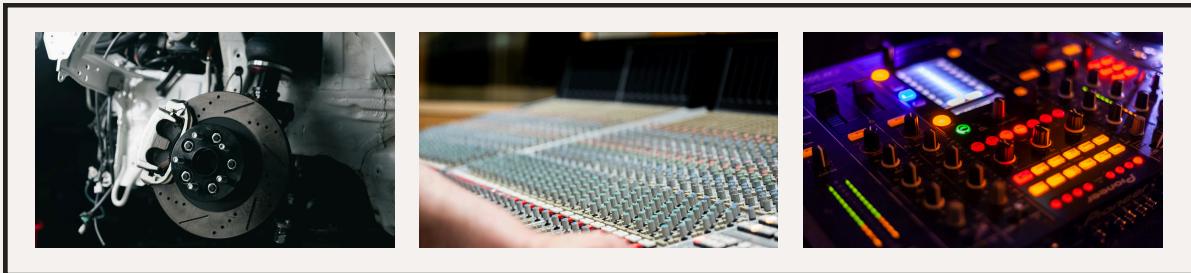
AUDIO SYSTEM UPDATE



West Music has been provided with payment for our new audio system and will soon begin the installation.

A grant meeting is scheduled with The Depot for February 10th.

Thank you so much to everyone who has donated. If you are still interested in contributing, your donation at this time would still be very useful and appreciated and help us to further offset the cost of this important system that helps us serve community members unable to attend services in person as well as serve our members who are hearing impaired.



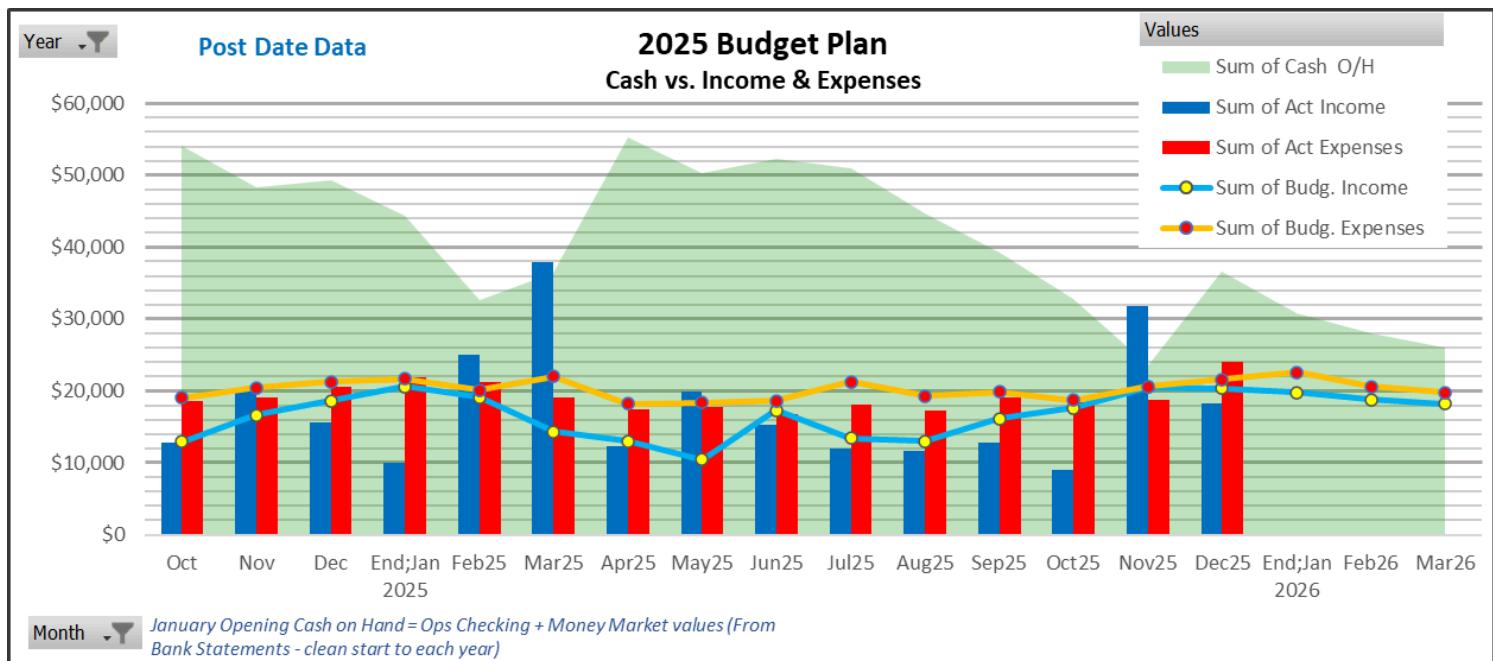
TREASURER'S CORNER

From Steve:

As we rapidly approach the close of the year and focus our attention to the birth of our savior, I wish for each of you to have a blessed Christmas season!

I am preparing this report on the 22nd...so we are still a ways off from the actual year end. Rather than "forecast" what the final numbers will be, I will supply you with the actual results that I have recorded thus far...giving you a picture of what we know for sure.

- December income is currently at \$18.3K on a plan of \$20.3K.
- YTD income is currently tracking to \$216.3K on a plan of \$195.9K! A fantastic shift to the positive.
- December expenses are currently at \$24.1K on a plan of \$21.6K.
- YTD expenses are tracking to \$229.8 on a plan of \$240.4K! Also, a great position reversal.
- Our year-end working cash position looks to be landing at \$30.8K, up again from last month!



Treasurer's Corner Continued

We completed the year with only a small draw on our "stop-gap" funding (back in March) from the Trustees, and we were able to fully meet our 2025 Apportionment obligations.

Our Money Market account now stands at \$27K, with our Operational checking account at \$6.6K (this will of course change a bit as I pay our final bills/payroll for the end of the year).

Our benevolent activity for the year is as follows:

- Giving Income = \$23.2K.
- Trustees and other asset transfers in = \$11.7K.
- Total payouts for the year = \$36.5K (there will be a bit more paid out closer to the actual year end).
- So we have actually paid out a bit more than we've taken in for the year.
 - Clearly our two biggest areas of activity were the Trustees grants and this year's Sister Parish delegation trip.
 - If you'd like to see all of the actual detail, just let me know, I'll be happy to provide it (it's just a bit too much to try and show it in the Tower...even a magnifying glass wouldn't help!)

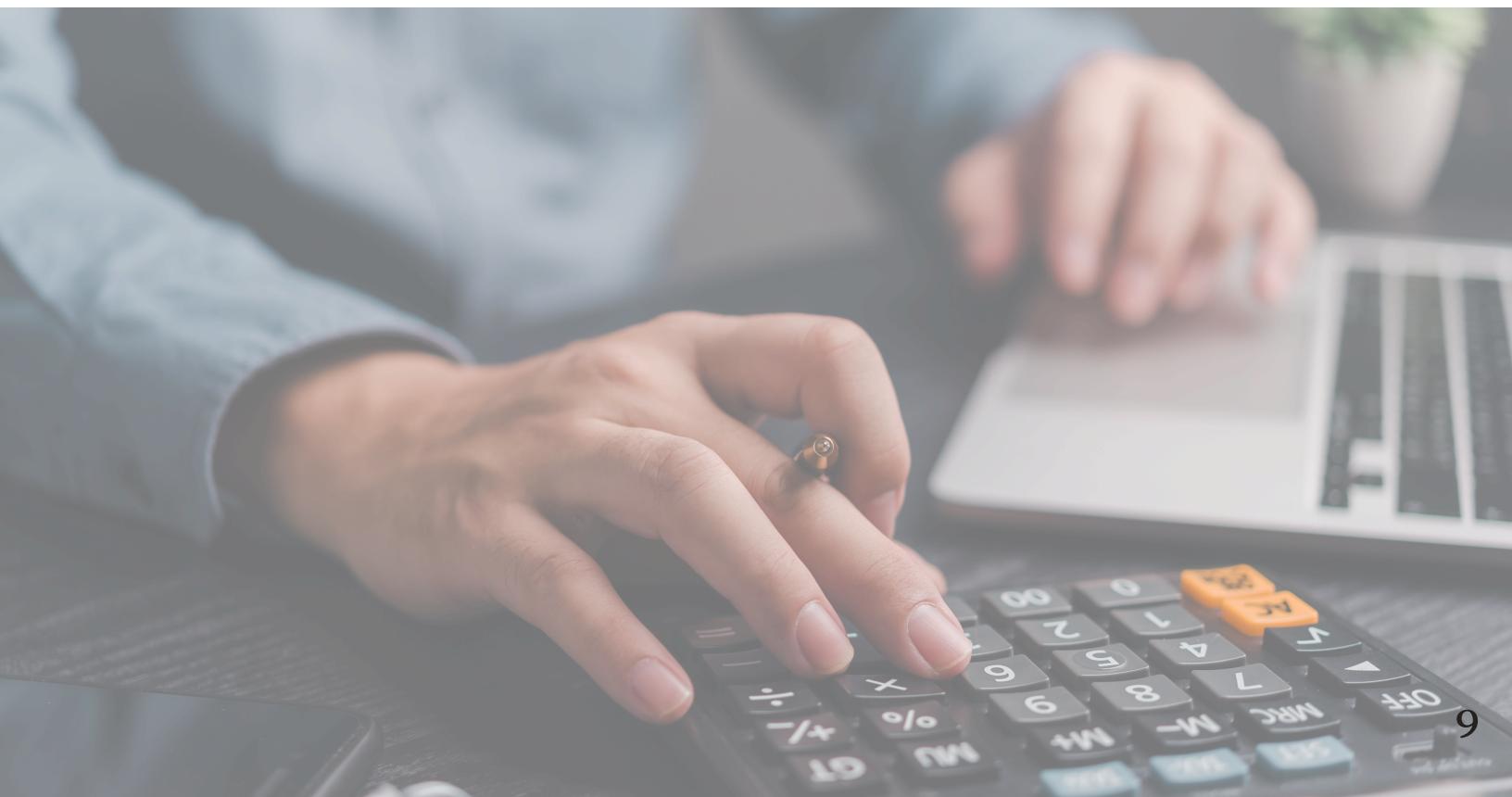
Please let me know if you have any questions regarding these numbers or the chart shown.

Thank you for your strong support of Decorah First United Methodist Church!

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!!!!

Peace and love,

Steve Rarick, Treasurer
(847) 830-9891 mobile



Giving Commitment Cards

This year we invite you to celebrate the joy of generosity as you offer your Estimate of Giving Commitment Card for 2026. We encourage you to find greater contentment and simplicity in your lives as you put God first in your giving and living and to experience the joy that comes from knowing our gifts honor God and change lives. Our challenge as members is to find ways to grow deeper in our faith. One way to do this is to offer our financial blessings to God through our tithes and offerings. Through these gifts, we invest in God's vision and purpose and create an opportunity for God to work through us.

Our gifts to God each week are an act of worship; and our offerings are vitally necessary to change lives, transform communities, and renew mainline churches. We will be sending out pledge cards in the first week of January. We will also have some available at the church for you. We ask that you take time to prayerfully consider your giving to the church and to fill out a pledge card. If things change throughout the year and you are unable to give what you have pledged, it is okay.

We understand that things happen which are out of our control. Don't let your inability to give at this time keep you from worship. Remember that God honors your faithfulness and that your acceptance at Decorah First UMC is not based on your capacity to give. We ask that everyone return an Estimate of Giving Commitment Card even if it is a limited financial commitment at this time. You can always increase or decrease your commitment if your situation changes by calling the church.

You may be asking yourself, '**Why do I need to return an Estimate of Giving Commitment Card?**'

There are two reasons why it is important that every member of our church family return an Estimate of Giving Commitment Card. First, the process of prayerfully asking God to guide your decision and then making a commitment to serve the Lord with your financial gifts is an act of worship, an expression of gratitude and praise to God. Second, on a more practical note, your commitment allows our church to budget and better plan for our ministries, key objectives, and mission outreach programs.

We will have a special time of bringing the commitment cards forward to be prayed over on **Sunday January 18, 2026**, and on **Sunday, January 25, 2026**.

You can also drop off your commitment card to the office or through the mail. Giving through direct deposit is also available. If you are interested in giving in this manner, please speak to Steve Rarick.

Trust Fund Applications

2026 Trust Fund Applications are still available. A printed copy is attached to this edition of The Tower. You can also request a digital copy from Cerrisa in the front office. Applications are due on Friday, **January 16, 2026**.

If emailing an application, please send to:
Decorah-First-UMC@IAUMC.net.

Buntrock Scholarship Applications

Any of our members are attending college this year, you are invited to apply for a Buntrock Scholarship. Applications are due to the church office by **April 30, 2026**.

They will be reviewed at our March Administrative Council Meeting. Chosen applicants will be notified following our meeting.

A copy of the Buntrock Scholarship Application is attached to this issue of The Tower. If you would like one emailed to you, please reach out to Cerrisa in the front office.

If emailing an application, please send to:
Decorah-First-UMC@IAUMC.net.



Mobile Meal Delivery

We would like to thank the following volunteers for delivering Mobile Meals during the months of October, November, and December 2025!

- LeRoy and Deanna McClintock
- Karla Lechtenberg
- Syd and Dick Stephenson
- Nancy Ruen
- Linda and Bob Watson
- Kathy and Spence McKinney
- Jerry Thompson
- Candace and Dave Arp
- Jayme, Sharon, and Shelly Folkedahl
- Mark Cline
- Barb and Steve Johnson
- Sally and Don Stromseth
- Kathi Mitchell and some of her students
- Kathy Johnson and Jane Hardy
- Sherry and Kristy Schilling
- Beth and Gary Crawford

-Beth Crawford



Painting from 2014 Sister Parish Delegation

This painting was gifted to our congregation during the 2013 north to south delegation. It is of the central community area of Potrerillos and features the Catholic Church.

Someone brought it home folded up in a suitcase and it has been sitting in a storage room ever since. Some of us recently cleaning things out found it and I took it to be framed. We will be sharing it with the UCC and take turns hosting it so others in the congregation can enjoy it. We will send updates as we find out who the artist is!

Thanks!
Emily Young-Johnson





COFFEE SERVERS

LITURGIST

January 4: Nancy Ruen

Steve Luse

January 11: Sara & Steve Luse Kay Bronshteyn

January 18: Deb Bishop
& Sharon Rossman

Mark Landas

January 25th: Sally & Don
Stromseth

Alan Lerstrom

*May the Joy of Christmas Fill Your Hearts with Love!
The Decorah Community Food Pantry Board of Directors
is grateful for your overwhelming support. We wish you
abundant blessings in the coming year!*



TRUST FUND APPLICATION

First United Methodist Church
302 W. Broadway PO Box 221
Decorah, IA 52101

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) awards grant funds from the investment returns of its Trust Fund annually at the January meeting of the Administrative Council. Ministries of FUMC and community organizations meeting eligibility requirements are invited to apply.

Eligibility Requirements: Projects funded by FUMC's Trust Fund awards will serve the poor, marginalized, and underserved in the Decorah community and surrounding areas.

Please use this form in making an application. Hard copies are available at the church office and electronic copies are available by contacting the church at **563-419-1184** or emailing decorah-first-umc@iaumc.net.

Typed applications are preferable. Applications are due in hard copy to the church office or electronically to decorah-first-umc@iaumc.net on Friday, **January 16, 2026.**

Date:

Group Making Application:

Contact Person:

Address and Phone Number:

FUMC Member/Sponsor Name:

Amount requested for project:

Have you received funds for this project before? If so, when, and how much was received?

If this is an ongoing project, how has it been funded in the past? Specifically describe the project:

What do you hope the project will accomplish?

Describe population to be served and how many people you hope to reach

**Please limit your application to no more than 2 pages.*

APPLICATION

ARTHUR AND ELSIE BUNTRICK MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Given by Decorah FirstUnited Methodist Church
Decorah, Iowa

DUE FEBRUARY 28, 2026

NAME_____ DATE_____

ADDRESS_____

PHONE NUMBER_____

Are you a member of the First United Methodist Church, Decorah, Iowa?
_____ Year of joining

Have you previously received any grant from this Scholarship? _____
Grants are available two times.

If you have received a grant, When? _____

Please state your program of post-high school education, including and career goals and the school you are or intend to be enrolled in.

Please state in concise form your current Christian belief and church commitment and how your faith affects your career goals and choices.