

The Circuit Rider

The newsletter of First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, Ohio

August/September 2025

Loving God and Loving People, Making Disciples of Christ for the Transformation of the World

IT'S KICK-OFF SEASON!



Lancaster City Schools are starting early this year on August 14-15. First UMC is helping Tallmadge Elementary with school supplies. Lists for elementary children may be picked up starting on Sunday, July 27. Buy a few items or a whole set. All items will be distributed to students who need to supplement their supplies. School supplies and other items will be tax free August 1-14. Please return your items by August 10.

Kick-Off Sunday, September 7

As summer draws to a close, it is time to return to the normal routine. On September 7, Sunday school classes for children will return both hours. The nursery will have children up to 1st grade. Children, grades 2-5, will meet on the first floor, in the room by the display case and stairs. Sixth grade students have the joy of being a part of the youth (grades 6-12) and attending class at 10:30 a.m. in the basement.



Make a joyful noise to the Lord, ALL the Earth!

God is calling YOU to be in service. Music ministry is an extremely fulfilling means to answer that call. If you are not yet involved in music ministry at FUMC, now is the time to change that. The fall is always a great time to become a part of one of our music groups as everyone is getting started. Here are some of the opportunities:

Chancel Choir Open to all persons of high school age and above. We'll teach you everything you need to know. The group practices on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. upstairs in the music room in the main building. First practice is August 28th.

Bell Choir The Hi-Lo Ringers practice on Thursday nights, 6:30-7:15 p.m. upstairs in the music room, beginning September 11th. The group is open to people of high school age through adult. Some music reading ability is helpful. We have vacancies that we'll need to fill to start the season.

Praise Team/Band Singer or instrumentalist positions are open by audition as needed. Just let Clarence know you're interested.

Don't see what you're looking for or do you need more information?

Contact Clarence at <u>clarencemccoy@love-first.org</u> or at 653-3330, ext. 1004, and we'll see how we can put your calling and your talent to work for Christ!



Great Is Your Faithfulness:Practicing Resilience Together

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NRSV) reminds us: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

God's faithfulness is the foundation of our hope—and our resilience. I've been learning a lot about the human capacity for resilience lately. Resilience is not about avoiding hardship, but about learning to face it with courage, adaptability, and grace. It's the steady work of bouncing back from difficulty, learning to endure rather than escape, and choosing to stay present and reflective when life feels uncertain.

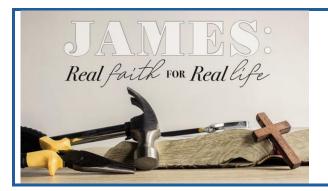
Resilience also invites us into deeper connection which is strengthened by our ability to feel empathy and feel compassion for one another. Empathy isn't something that happens on its own, it is a skill that must be developed. And if empathy is practiced and extended, then the community grows and thrives. In her book, *Daring Greatly*, author and researcher, Brene Brown writes: "The willingness to show up changes us. It makes us a little braver each time." So, practicing empathy builds resilience.

Last week, seven adults and two youth from our church embodied empathy and learned about practicing resilience as they traveled to Western North Carolina to serve survivors of Hurricane Helene. Nine months after the storm that claimed over 100 lives, destroyed or damaged more than 100,000 homes, caused over 200 landslides, and brought more than 20 inches of rain to the area surrounding the city of Asheville, lives still bear the deep scars of the storms and flood waters. But alongside 41 other United Methodists from Ohio, we showed up. We worked, listened, prayed, and rebuilt—not just homes, but hope. As we learned and served together, we witnessed firsthand the power of God's great faithfulness and mercy.

We saw how God is present and active, even amid horrible circumstances. We saw evidence of how God keeps showing up and showing us the way. Around tables of shared food, in homes rebuilt from shared resources and labor, in neighbors taking care of neighbors, and in lives moving from grief to hope, God's faithfulness shines through. So, as we end our summer heading into a new season of festivals and fairs, a new program year, and a new school year, remember the value of empathy, and of showing up for one another. Let us nurture resilience—not as something fixed, but as a skill we grow together through shared faith, empathy, and trust in God's renewing love. Every morning is a new beginning. Let's rise into it with hope. I am so blessed to be serving with you all!

God loves you, and so do I!

Pastor Nikki



What We'll Hear from the Pulpit

Aug. 3 When Faith Meets Trials
Aug. 10 Doers of the Word
Aug. 17 Faith Without Favoritism
Aug. 24 Faith and Works: Two Sides of Grace
Aug. 31 Taming the Tongue
Sept. 7 Praying Like It Matters

Come and See: Explore First and Joining the Journey

Are you new to First United Methodist Church or looking for a deeper connection to a faith community? We invite you to take your next step with us through two welcoming opportunities designed to help you explore your faith and discover where you belong.

Explore First! is a short, friendly gathering that happens six times a year—right after each worship service. It's co-facilitated by one of our pastors and a staff member and offers a chance to get to know who we are, what matters to us, and how we're working together to share God's love and strengthen the Lancaster community. You're invited to join us on **Sunday, September 14** at **10:10 a.m. or 11:40 a.m.** downstairs in **Fellowship Hall**. No need to sign up—just come as you are!

If you're considering making First UMC your church home, **Joining the Journey** is for you. We'll gather for two meaningful evenings of dinner and conversation in Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, September 21** and **Sunday, October 12**, from **5:00–7:00 p.m.** Together, we'll talk about life in community at FUMC, our world-wide United Methodist Church Connection, and what it means to be a vital part of the local body of Christ. Those who choose to join will be welcomed into membership during the **worship service of their choice on Sunday, October 19**.

We'd love to travel this journey with you. Come and see how your story might find a home in ours.

If you'd like to participate in **Joining the Journey**, please call or email to let us know who you are, how many will be attending, and your contact information. Also, let us know if you would like childcare with the names and ages of your children who will attend.

receptionist@love-first.org or (740) 653-3330

WELCOME TO THE TRUSTEES' CORNER...

We would like to thank everyone that came to our June 22 open house. It was great to see everyone, and we hope you had a wonderful time of fellowship.

After years of hard work, David and Debra Smith have retired from being our main church beautification landscapers to full-time grandparents. We greatly appreciate the Smith family's service. A huge thank you to Erin Davis and her crew for volunteering and weeding in-between rainstorms.

Air Force One has been working tirelessly troubleshooting and assisting with a plan on the HVAC unit. It was discovered that one of the 40-year-old compressors in the twin 20-ton unit failed last month. With the blessing from our Endowment, the compressor has been replaced, but unfortunately, the 500+ lb. compressor is defective. We are optimistic that they will be getting us fully up and running soon!

In addition, we completed the Tower Hall painting and gutter work at Crossroads. We are continuing to address the immediate needs of the properties.

Thank you for your patience, prayers, love and support,
The Trustees

You Make the Church What It Is!

GENEROSITY: Midwest Mission

Thank you to all of you who donated to this year's Annual Conference Mission Project. We collected over 400 items for Hands of Hope, including onesies, tools, and walkers. The items collected were part of the 5,000 items from the West Ohio Conference that went to Midwest Mission, a partner of UMCOR (United Mwdthodist Committee on Relief).



MISSION: Drinking Coffee Changes the World

The coffee and tea served on Sunday mornings is from Hope Coffee company. Hope Coffee works with coffee farmers and their families to help them earn a livable wage and to share the hope of Christ.

This past Christmas, instead of send Hope Partners (like FUMC) a gift, Hope Coffee provided 58 water filters to families in Santa Barbara, Honduras. Pastors Carlos and Arnulfo took the filters to the remote village. They then explained how Christ makes our lives clean, just like the filters clean the water. Afterwards, four women dedicated their lives to Christ and another recommitted to following our savior.

Do we pay a little more for our coffee and tea? Yes, but that extra cost allows the love of Christ to be shared in Honduras, Mexico and Africa. Since 2011, over 500 families have been impacted by this business ministry. So, drink up! And know your coffee habit helps others to know Jesus.

OUTREACH: Planning for Christmas Nativity

Each year, the church prepares for Christmas by displaying a walk though Nativity at the Crossroads location. The beautiful 50-inch Fontanini statues are hand-crafted and hand-painted. To continue this ministry, help is needed. Ten to 15 people will work over 4 days to set up the figures, the lighting, and the sound effects. The statues are heavy and require the ability to lift 75 pounds. Some of the lighter items weigh around 25 pounds. Some of the helpers will also be lifting items over their head and positioning items while on a ladder. In addition, people with sound/lighting technical expertise are needed. If you can participate, please contact Pastor Kathleen Kisner or Dave Goslin.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



an example of focaccia

Food for Thought: Creative Cooking & Visioning for Children

On August 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., children in grades 3-6 are invited to a time of cooking and visioning. As the new school year approaches, children will have the opportunity to envision what the next school year could be for them. Through art focaccia and vision boards, the students will learn to express their feelings and create a healthy mindset. To register for this event, contact Pastor Kathleen. Up to 12 students will be able to participate.

Celebrating UBS 2025

Road Trip: On the Go with God

Things were hopping at Crossroads during Vacation Bible School in July. Even though our numbers were small, the kids learned about how God is always there for them and had lots of fun.

Six churches participated.

Special thanks to all of our volunteers and a super thank you to our two coordinators, **Alexia Wing** (left) and **Sarah Mullins** (right).













Caring Ministries

Contact: Judy Hug, CLM judyhug@love-first.org or 740-653-3330, ext. 1003



GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE The Red Cross Bloodmobile will visit our Crossroads campus on Monday, September 15, 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. The need for blood is critical, as it is used for many different surgeries and for treatment of a variety of illnesses. The components of each Whole Blood donation can potentially be used to help three people and can make a difference in a person's quality of life, and even life and death. Can't donate? Volunteer to help register donors or coordinate the Canteen. To register to donate, go online to www.redcrossblood.org or contact Judy Hug.



SWEET TREATS

Join us for a monthly outpouring of God's love and yummy treats as we reconnect with members of First UMC no longer able to attend church! Cookies and fresh fruit are collected, placed in bags stamped 'Made Lovingly by the Hands of First United Methodist Church" and delivered with a prayer insert to those in area residential facilities or in their own homes.

Whether you're a cookie baker, bagger, or deliverer, we would love to have you join us the second Saturday each month at 8:30am in the Fellowship Hall at the church Main Campus. Bring a friend to enjoy the fun and to share in the blessing of sharing God's love!

Safer Sanctuaries Training

Watch upcoming bulletins for information about additional sessions for Safer Sanctuaries Training. If you have already attended a full session (not VBS), you need not attend one this Fall. If you are a leader of any small groups (Youth, Book Club, Crossroads Community, etc.) or Sunday School teacher for any age, you must have this training annually as required by our Conference. The Safer Sanctuaries Policy can be reviewed on our website. Questions? Contact Pastor Kathleen or Judy Hug.



Worship at The Springs

First UMC has begun a worship community at The Springs at Wyandot Trail! We meet the second Sunday each month, 1:00 – 1:40pm. The group is comprised of about 20 residents and staff, including two of our members who would love to reconnect with us! Conducted as a worship service, our time together is spent in prayer, singing, a short message, and Holy Communion. What a joy it is to bring God's word to others!





An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) can save the lives of persons experiencing specific types of cardiac emergencies. For every minute an AED is delayed in being applied, a person's chances of survival decrease by 10%. Our church is continuing efforts to replace the Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) located both at the church and at Crossroads. Training in the use of our AEDs will be offered to anyone interested after our new units have been installed.

Prayer Ministry



Prayer is one of the most important and accessible of our spiritual practices, available to all no matter the circumstance or location. There are several ways in which you can participate in the prayer life of our church:

- 1) Become a link in our Prayer Chain, receiving weekly prayer requests from attendees (both in worship and online) and those visiting our website.
- 2) Visit The Chapel on the second floor at church. Sit with Jesus for a quiet moment, or use resources provided to inspire prayer during your visit.
- 3) Use our monthly Prayer Calendar with special prayer requests of our church and community and prompts to grow your prayer life.
- 4) Create a Prayer Small Group that meets regularly to pray for our clergy and staff, our church family, our facilities, our community, our nation, and our world.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

Visitation Ministries

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40

Visitation is not a hobby – it is a gift shared between the visitor and the person being visited. It can bring much joy into darkness for both giver and receiver and offers assurance of God's presence and love for those who are ill or injured, or homebound. Whether visiting someone in the hospital or residential facility or creating a one-on-one relationship with someone unable to attend church, Visitation Ministries offers an arrangement tailored to your gifts and needs – or those of your family – and to the needs of those desiring visits.

Beginning September 7, check the 'Who Is My Neighbor?' board in the parlor to discover who in your neighborhood is on our Visitation roster!

Family Care Ministry

When families gather following a funeral, providing a meal is an act of love and hospitality. This ministry needs helpers, if only on an occasional basis, to prepare meal items (salad, dessert, casserole), set up for the meal, serve the meal, and clean up after the meal. Meals are served in our Fellowship Hall at the church Main Campus and are offered to the families of church members.

Donna Waugh has been, and continues to be, our Coordinator for the Family Care Ministry, serving a total of 520 meals over 32 years! Thank you, Donna, for your years of dedicated service in bringing grieving families together around the table!



Ohio Conference Laity Convocation

Bishop Hee Soo Jung has invited all Ohio laity for a two-day gathering of lively worship and invigorating training. The event will be held at Worthington UMC on August 15-16, and our van can transport those interested. Register online at https://www.westohioumc.org/ministries/laity-convocation for the QR code or contact Judy Hug.

We express our sincere sympathy to the families of those who have lost loved ones:



Betty Anne Boone
Clarence Bope
Charles Eversole
Shirley Fisher
Geraldine Gribble
Richard Honsberger
Robert Jepsen
Richard Welch
Betty Wilson



Baptism

Walker James Scalf Parents are Tyler and Lindsay Scalf.



CONTACT: Ann & Jeff Cherry (740) 215-0563 Jeff and I are overwhelmed by the response of your donations to Short East Community Kitchen! Thank you so much!! God is so good!

We appreciate your continued support of the Kitchen. Items we are requesting for August and September are:

AUGUST SEPTEMBER
Small paper plates Coffee

Powdered creamer 9 oz. plastic cups

Oatmeal packets Plastic spoons and forks

We are always looking for volunteers! If you have a few hours to spend on any given day - let us know! We can always use help with set-up, breakfast, lunch, and tear down. Also dishwashers!

If you have any questions or need information, contact Jeff or Ann.

College Care Packages-Donations Needed!

Our church is blessed to have many college students in our family this fall, and we want each one to feel supported and loved! The Higher Education Outreach & Scholarship Committee is putting together care packages, and we need your help!

Collection dates: September 7th through October 5th **Donation collection**: in the Parlor

Suggested Donation Items:

- Snack-size crackers, cookies, chips, pretzels, etc.
- Protein bars, granola, or other snack bars
- Jolly Ranchers, Starburst, packs of gum, mints, etc.
- Microwave popcorn
- Chapstick, hand sanitizer, tissues
- Post-it Notes
- Note paper or note cards
- Highlighters, pens, pencils

Cash donations are also welcomed - for postage or to purchase additional items. Thank you for helping us share **God's love** with our students near and far!

Dear FUMC Scholarship Committee,

Thank you all for the support and continued financial help as I navigate finding my true calling! I feel blessed to have such a strong church family behind me!

Jeremy Watson

Dear First United Methodist Church,

Thank you so much for the scholarship you awarded me. Your generosity is a true blessing, and I'm deeply grateful for your support. We serve a mighty and faithful God. His power and goodness continue to guide my journey, and I see his love through this gift.

With heartfelt thanks, Peyton Wilson

Lancaster First United Methodist Church,

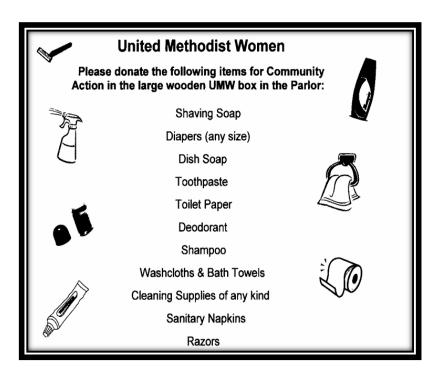
Thank you so much for giving me this generous scholarship. FUMC has always been an important part of my life. This scholarship will be a great help as I continue on my pursuit of a higher education.

Best, Reagan Thomas

First United Methodist Church,

On Behalf of the Lighthouse, I wanted to thank you for your incredibly generous donation! The Lighthouse can continue offering crucial services focused on prevention, education, and treatment of family violence, because of your generosity! All services the Lighthouse provides are free, confidential, and available to anyone.

Thank you, Amy





Elizabeth Circle

Elizabeth Circle will meet on Thursday, September 18, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 22 at the church. New members are always welcome. Please join us!

Trinity Circle

A social meeting is planned for Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at El Parian restaurant (formerly Shaw's) at 11:30 a.m. Call or text Marty Cyrus at (740) 407-7909 if you are interested in attending.

Our usual card making event will be on Wednesday, September 10, at noon at the church in Room 22.

A Message from Janie...

Dear Church Family at FUMC,

I have spent the last 3 years working as the youth director at our church, and I had a wonderful time. Unfortunately, due to my health and back problems, I need to step away from this job and become a regular church member again. August 1st will be my last day on staff. I will still volunteer to teach the 10:30 a.m. youth class at church. We could use others to help teach as well so please join me in that calling. I will continue to run the library with Destinie's help. I am still going to be helping the college scholarship board as well. You will still see me at hospitality on the 5th Sundays of a month, (any youth are still welcome to help me on those days). I would also welcome being a mentor to any youth going into a confirmation class so look me up if you're in need of one.

God has given me an amazing journey these past 3 years and my faith has grown. I in no way felt like I was the best for this job, but I felt God's help every step of the way. I encourage everyone at church to step out of their comfort zone and be there for someone else in their faith journey. Even if you don't feel the most qualified and are scared, just remember God made you to be exactly who you are for a reason, and he's not done with you yet! Thank you to everyone who has helped me and for all your prayers!

Janie Burdsal Fellow family member of FUMC

Youth Ministry

Changes Coming to Youth Ministry

We are sorry to be losing our youth director, Janie Burdsal, as a staff member. However, youth ministry will still continue. Janie will continue to teach Sunday school at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays. However, Sunday nights will be on hiatus until a new vision is articulated. In addition, if you are interested in participating in Confirmation classes, please contact Pastor Kathleen.

This is where your help is needed! In the next few months, Pastor Nikki and Pastor Kathleen will be working with students, their parents, and those passionate about youth ministry, to discern a new direction for this important ministry. If you have ideas about the ministry or gifts you are willing to share with the students, please contact one of the pastors. Also, watch for any planning meetings in the near future. Our youth are already an integral part of the church, and we want to continue to nurture them in their faith.

Children's Ministry

New Check-in

Over the summer, a new check-in system has been introduced. The computer check-in system will allow for easy attendance tracking and confirm contact information. The two-part name tag system (child wears name tag and adult has matching tag) will still be in place for up to grade 5.

Sunday School Teachers Needed

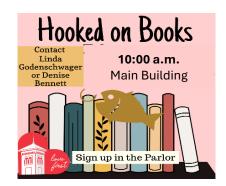
As the school year begins, it is time to staff our Sunday school classes and nursery. There is a need for teachers, assistants or substitute teachers for elementary classes. Also, adult assistants are needed for the nursery to grade 1 class. To learn more about this ministry, contact Pastor Kathleen.

Stay Connected



News from the Library

Recent release *God Helped Me Clear Hurdles to Win My Race* from Covenant Books author and FUMC member Katherine Bontrager is a captivating and heartfelt autobiographical account that chronicles the her life as she looks back over the past 88 years, reflecting on how God has helped her overcome whatever challenges life has presented her. Her second book, available soon, titled *My Passion: Piety, Poetry and Potpourri* contains more than 118 poems.



Hooked on Books will meet on Monday, August 4 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 22 of the main church building. We will be reading and discussing *The Wish* by Nicholas Sparks. Our September meeting will be the 2nd Monday, September 8, because of Labor Day. Our book will be *To the Moon and Back* by Karen Kingsbury. *Ouestions? Contact:*

Linda Godenschwager 740-503-6026 or Denise Bennett 740-503-7210

Mark Your Calendars CR = Crossroads, M = Main Church Building

Weekly Meetings

Mondays: 6:30 p.m. Boys Scouts (CR)

Wednesdays: 9:00 a.m. Fellowship Quilters (CR)

Wednesdays: 3:00 p.m. Chair Volleyball (CR)

Wednesdays: 6:30 p.m. Crossroads Community (CR)

Thursdays: 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir (M)

7:30 p.m. Choir Practice M)

Fridays: 3:45 p.m. Girls Scouts (M)

Additional Events

<u>AUGUST</u>			
4	10:00 a.m.	Hooked on Books (M)	
9	8:00 a.m.	Sweet Treats (M)	
11	6:30 p.m.	Worship & Music Committee (M)	
12	6:00 p.m.	Finance Committee (M)	
	6:30 p.m.	Food for Thought (CR)	
18	6:30 p.m.	Staff Parish Relations	
		Committee (M)	
21	6:30 p.m.	Trustees (M)	
24	3:00 p.m.	New Member Class (M)	
27	6:30 p.m.	Missions Meeting (M)	
28	7:30 p.m.	Choir Practice begins (M)	

<u>SEPTEMBER</u>				
4	6:30 p.m.	Bell Choir Practice begins (M)		

6 8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast (CR)

8 10:00 a.m. Hooked on Books (M)

9 6:00 p.m. Permanent Endowment (M)

10 12:00 p.m. Trinity Circle (M)13 8:00 a.m. Sweet Treats (M)

14 10:10 a.m., 11:40 a.m. Explore First (M)13 6:00 p.m. Finance Committee (M)

15 1:00 p.m. Red Cross Blood Drive (CR) 6:30 p.m. Staff-Paris Relations (M)

18 9:30 a.m. Elizabeth Circle (M)

5:30 p.m. Trustees (M)

21 5:00 p.m. Joining the Journey (M)22 6:00 p.m. Church Council (M)

24 6:30 p.m. Missions (M)

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

(740) 653-3330

Nikki Baker (Pastor) nikkibaker@love-first.org ext. 1001 Kathleen Kisner (Assoc. Pastor) kathleenkisner@love-first.org ext. 1009 Clarence McCoy (Worship Arts) clarencemccoy@love-first.org ext. 1004 Judy Hug, CLM (Caring Ministries) judyhug@love-first.org, ext. 1002 Sarah Mason (Business Admin) sarahmason@love-first.org ext. 1005 Michael Belt (Financial Secretary) michaelbelt@love-first.org ext. 1007 Barb Hunt (Administrative Assistant) receptionist@love-first.org, ext. 1000 Chip Elder (Maintenance) chipelder@love-first.org

It's easy to follow everything happening at Lancaster First. In addition to our Facebook page, we have an X account and an Instagram account. Keep up to date with our events and resources. Follow us at: Facebook: Lancaster First United Methodist Church;

X: LoveFirstUMC:

Instagram: Lancasterfirstumchurch





Articles for the October/November issue of the **CIRCUIT RIDER are due by September 15** to Clarence McCoy, clarencemccoy@love-first.org. Janet Gossell, Circuit Rider Editor

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is the bi-monthly newsletter of First United Methodist Church 163 E. Wheeling St. Lancaster, OH 43130

Sunday 9:00 a.m. -- Worship Celebration 10:30 a.m. -- Praise Worship

Wednesday 6:30 p.m. -- Crossroads Community **Crossroads Ministry Center** 2095 W. Fair Ave.

We welcome you to worship with us and to experience the joy of having fellowship with other people who believe in the love of God and the teachings of Christ.

Lead Pastor -- Rev. Nikki Baker Associate Pastor -- Rev. Kathleen Kisner

Telephone: 740-653-3330 Email: receptionist@love-first.org Website: www.love-first.org

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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