



Newman Catholic Student Center



By Father Jeff Belger

I have always enjoyed Fall the most out of all the seasons of the year. My most comfortable outfit is a pair of shorts with a sweatshirt. There is something about the fall that draws us outside to see the beauty of creation, the bounty of the harvest, and the cycle of life.

I went out with a group of students after Thursday Night Mass in October, because we heard that the Northern Lights were appearing in the sky. When something in the natural world, so rare and so beautiful as the Northern Lights, invites you outside late at night, you know you are still young when you make the decision against a good night's sleep. Sharing these moments strengthens bonds of friendship. Whether it's something rare like the Northern Lights, or something a little more predictable like going for a hike to enjoy the fall colors, it is good to remember that for all the blessings of the intellectual pursuits, such as theology and ecclesiology, we are invited into a life-giving relationship with the God of the natural world. Jesus Christ, the living word of God, became man through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the consent of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He came into our natural world, to meet us where we are. The God who created all

things took on flesh and experienced the natural world, and among those who inhabit the natural world.

As you look through the pages of this newsletter, I want you to notice something that has transformed the ministry here at the Newman Center. Just as Jesus came into our world to meet us where we are, we have made it our purpose to go out and meet students where they are. It is a type of incarnational ministry. We enter into their lives and develop authentic friendships. And as we get to know them, we have the opportunity to share our lives with them. We have an opportunity to share what brings us joy, identity, and mission. Then, we invite them into a relationship with Christ and his Church leading by example, as we deepen our relationship with Christ and His Church. We like to share our ministry by the numbers, showing the growth that we are experiencing. **But it is not about the numbers, it is about the souls that those numbers represent.**

The season of fall causes me to look back on my childhood. This is usually triggered by a song. There is a song from my childhood, entitled: "All Good Gifts", which I thought was a new song back

then. As it turns out it was a song written back in 1782, and someone gave it new life for the musical, *Godspell*, by changing the tune. Strangely, I have never seen *Godspell*. If you Google *Godspell*, you will likely laugh a little bit, at the strangeness of the musical. But as for me, the music has made its way into my heart. My grade school music teacher, Sister Rose, must have loved it because through her, I remember singing most of the songs both in class and at Mass. As I think about the lyrics, I appreciate how we are called to engage the natural world in ministry, just as a farmer engages the natural world in agriculture. So, we all have our part. And by we, I mean the collective "we." I give thanks to God for all our benefactors, who by their generosity give us the resources that allow us to do what we have been doing. It is we, the Church, who plow and scatter. Then we ask God's blessings. And as you will see in this newsletter, God has blessed the Church abundantly.

📖 *We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land, but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand. So, thank the Lord, oh thank the Lord for all his love...* 📖

Casting Wide the Net

Outreach Events Draw Large Crowds to Newman Center Community

By Christine Wissink, Director of Outreach and Education



One of my roles on the staff is to work with student leaders to plan outreach activities. We start in the spring with our new

student leaders to plan for fall semester outreach. Every year we evaluate our events to improve them and strive to have a greater impact on campus. A few improvements we made this year were to wear our new, student designed Newman t-shirts to the volleyball event on campus, have professional yard signs made for our activities, and added a third *On Iowa!* event to the two that we have been organizing and leading on campus for the last two years.

This year the Newman Center hosted three official *On Iowa!* welcome events for the University of Iowa: *Bump, Set, Spike* on Wednesday night, Thursday Night Student Mass and Bonfire, and, new this year, *Grill and Chill* on the Sunday before school started. This event included a barbecue lunch, live band, a scavenger hunt featuring our ministries, and door prizes. We saw an increase in participation at our *On Iowa!* activities this year due to the continual growth in the quantity and quality of our outreach that we have been building upon year after year.

In my role I oversee coordination between the University, Newman Center leadership, and outside vendors to prepare and execute

successful welcome events. The student leaders write grant proposals through the University of Iowa to get partial funding to for these events, design the t-shirts and other advertising, create and send postcards to invite incoming students, reserve campus spaces and equipment, recruit students to serve at the events, and go out on campus to invite new students to attend. It truly is a team effort.

Outreach is the responsibility of all of us and so we work together as a team - with nine Fellows, twenty-five Lead Team members, six FOCUS missionaries, Newman staff, the Board of Directors, and volunteers - on mission to **Go Out** as a community of faith to reach as many as we can.



From the Outreach Fellows...



I am so grateful for the fellow students I have met so far this year at our outreach events. The events were certainly blessed by God's hand because I have not see this much consistent attendance at Newman events since first coming here my freshman year. In large part, the success is due to the positive willingness and presence of our team members: Josh Kamenitzer, Jenna King, Oliver Dirkx, and Alissa Brummer! They show a zeal for serving and encountering others in a way that seem to have spread throughout all of Newman! It is going to be a great year.

- Liv Jackson, junior

I pray that the people we encountered during On Iowa! week may take a chance at the Newman Center as I did. The people are what make Newman the wonderful place it is. I will forever be thankful for my choice to try out Newman, and I hope the events we put on inspire others to join the community that made Iowa feel like home.

- Emily Kolich, senior





Record-Breaking Attendance at First Student Mass of the Year!

At the first Thursday Night Mass, or “TNM,” of the semester, on the Thursday before classes began, a total of 203 college students found their way into the Newman Center to worship the Lord and find community. It was an incredible and unprecedented number of students - but the growth and involvement does not stop there! Last semester, our Newman Center was averaging between 98-100 students attending weekly TNM. This fall semester, the average attendance for TNM is 151 students, an increase of over 50. (as of October 15)

There are many events we offer our students to participate in, but witnessing such a large number of college students prioritize their relationship with God by coming to TNM should bring all of us great hope and joy. 90% of Catholics who leave the faith do so during their college years; it is encouraging to see so many students hungry to know, love, and serve the Lord.

From our Liturgical Ministry Fellow:

Being a greater part of liturgical ministry at the Newman Center has allowed me to bring Christ to others in such a real and important way. Inviting others to intentionally participate and learn more about the mass fulfills the real mission of the Catholic Church in our community. The Lord has blessed my life and this ministry in ways I could not have previously imagined.



- Andrew Simaz, senior





Go, Make Disciples.

By Caitlin Dempsey, 2nd Year FOCUS Missionary



Serving as a FOCUS missionary at the University of Iowa has been one of- if not the biggest-blessing of my life.

I came onto mission believing the reason was to encounter souls and lead them to Jesus Christ. God is so merciful though that He has also used my time on mission to pull **me** closer to Him. It would be impossible to do mission without having a relationship with God first. Through daily holy hours and daily Mass, Jesus has shown me more of who He is and His heart.

It has also been a privilege to walk with college women and help lead them to Jesus. I truly believe that I have the best job in the world! My day consists of morning rosary, a holy hour

in Adoration, team meetings, meeting up with students, Mass and leading Bible studies and discipleship groups.

One of my favorite things about what I do is getting to reach out to women involved with sororities. I was in a sorority during my time in college at Cal State Fullerton. I experienced amazing friendships and memories in sorority, but also recognized that it was a place of brokenness and something that pulled me away from my faith at times. I know I am not alone in this experience. That is why it is a privilege to get to invest in sorority women and lead them to Jesus. Oftentimes, these women need intentional investment since they already have a community and busy schedules. I am happy to show them they have a place in the church and in the Newman Center.

One of my favorite memories of being a missionary so far is helping to lead a mission trip to Brazil. The team was able to bring eleven students to serve the spiritual needs of Petropolis, Brazil. The trip consisted of house visits, school visits and spending time with the local community there. The best part about the trip was seeing the students transformed by prayer and the life we lived in Brazil. Particularly, I was in awe of Carrie, a Theta sorority member who I invited to come on the mission trip. During each day on the trip, you could see her becoming more and more fully alive. You could see the Lord transforming her to be more like Him each day. This is one of the best parts of the mission, walking with women and seeing the Lord transform them.

By the Numbers: Fall 2024

Bible Study Groups: 61 groups, primarily led by students (Fall 2023: 30)

Bible Study Leaders: 60 plus students leading or co-leading (Fall 2023: 34)

Students Attending Bible Study: 316 students have attended a Bible Study at least once this semester *as of October 7th (Fall 2023: 165)

Students in Discipleship Formation: 110 students in discipleship formation where they are mentored by a missionary or fellow student (Fall 2023: 60)

Students Interviewing for FOCUS: 18 students will be interviewing and discerning the life of a FOCUS missionary (Fall of 2023: 7)

● Please Pray For...

- Student leaders to engage in a life of prayer and the Sacraments.
- Students discerning the life of a missionary or religious life.
- A fruitfull SEEK25 Conference (winter break) and Mission Trip to Ecuador (spring break)
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How My Life Changed Through a Bible Study

By Oliver Dirkx, junior

Hello All! I am Oliver Dirkx, and I have been leading a Bible Study at Newman for the past year. All I can say about this is that it has been a life-changing experience. My spiritual life has been immensely better because of this opportunity. It taught me how to understand and pick apart scripture and pull everything that God intended out of it. As I read, I consult the teachings of the saints and pray about everything I write with the intention of being able to ask thought-provoking questions for the men in my Bible Study. My goal with Bible Study is to give back to Newman what Newman has given me: relationship with God. I learned how to listen to God and how to be an advocate for Him and investing my men's lives is how I feel best called to serve God. My Bible Study has given me a platform to speak to so many people, and a recent opportunity presented itself: speaking at the retreat on the Eucharist and Sacrifice. This was one of, if not the hardest things I have done. Why me? Why this topic? I did not feel ready or worthy, but one phrase kept me going as I write this God does not call the equipped, he equips the called. The speech came out great as I have heard from many people. Here is one of my favorite excerpts from it, "As

I start to look ahead at the life that I should be living, I look at Jesus who lived a life of sacrifice, from beginning to end, and ask myself, why can't I try to be like Him? I would look at the Eucharist and feel shame for what I have done, but it is not something to shame us; it is something to look at and strive towards. Once we all learn to respect the Eucharist, the true sacrifice and learn how to die to our own desire, only then can we go forward in the full comfort and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ." Without a Bible Study, I would have never made it to Newman, and without my Bible Study, I never would have had the chance to speak to over one hundred students about Jesus, the Eucharist, and what this sacrifice means for us. All I can say is, thank you! Thank you to Newman, thank you for the Bible Study, and thank you God for allowing me to be here.



Finding Gratitude Through Leading a Bible Study

By Morgan Lally, sophomore

What is your favorite Bible story? (I am

genuinely asking, feel free to share with me anytime! (It's one of my favorite "get to know you" questions.) I will share first: Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers. The story where ten are healed and one returns to thank Jesus. There is something about gratitude in the Word that has always struck me, especially now because I find it uniquely at the Newman Center.

This year I have the honor of leading a Bible study for the first time. From the women I lead and those I have discipleship with I feel as if I have a new

idea of what it means to be grateful. My experience in the women's ministry is that we continuously desire to go deeper into the word, deeper into relationships, and deeper into prayer. I find we are excited to exceed those tremendous acts of scholarship and love by challenging each other. Challenging everything we think and believe with honest conviction. There is true community when this happens, this is what has made the Newman Center the Newman Community for me. For if the women are talking amongst themselves or to the Newman men a genuine connection noticeably follows.

This semester, I find my eyes have been

opened a new to the grace in the women of our community. I see it in their eyes when they build relationships at TNM or in Bible study. I hear it in their voices in the MPR, the choir room, and the Fireside lounge. It makes me grateful, be it in times of trial or delight, to know we are constantly being pursued by Christ through relationship with our sisters at Newman. Every week, I make it my mission to be thankful to the community at Newman, especially to the women's ministry, which has strengthened my faith in so many ways.

To all who read this, thank you for being a community that sets the world on fire – Jesus is waiting for you.

Welcoming Two New Missionaries!

Thanks to our growing student involvement and generous donors, we were able to add a sixth member to our FOCUS missionary team, and are welcoming two new faces this year! We are overjoyed to have Evan and Grace join our mission at Newman.



Being able to serve here on campus at Iowa for the past two months has been a joy. The Newman Center staff is a blast to work alongside, and the student community is like a family. I have the privilege to extend this family through my scope of mission work doing fraternity outreach, in which God has blessed my efforts, as we have several houses starting up Bible studies. I am excited to see how the Lord continues to bless this year, and thank you for your support!

- Evan Horak, 1st Year Missionary



"Hello everyone! My name is Grace Eischeid, and I just married Kobe Eischeid this past May! I have been a missionary with FOCUS at the University of Illinois at Chicago for the past three years, and now I'm at Iowa!! I'm so excited to enter into marriage, and to learn and grow alongside the students of the University of Iowa.

- Grace Eischeid, 4th Year Missionary



BEHOLD...

A Retreat Centered Around the Eucharist

James Allbright is no stranger to retreats- attending, planning, and leading seem to come natural to him. It is no wonder that he has participated in twelve retreats and led eight of those retreats! As the 2024-2025 Faith Formation Fellow, James leads the team that plans our undergraduate retreats each semester. Our Fall Undergraduate Retreat, BEHOLD, with its focus on the Eucharist attracted one hundred students- the highest attendance on record for a Newman retreat. "I was on the Faith Formation Lead Team last year, so ideas for themes for this year actually began last October (2023)," says James. "Picking a theme is important as it will give inspiration to retreat speakers, discussions, and small groups. With the Eucharistic Revival and the alarming statistics about Catholics' lack of understanding or devotion to the Eucharist the team wanted to highlight this vital aspect of our Catholic faith."

The retreat's name, **BEHOLD** was thoughtfully suggested by team member, Alyssa Konz. James and Alyssa had the opportunity to attend the Eucharistic Conference in July 2024 with a group from the Newman Center. James shared that after experiencing the joy and energy at the conference, he was even more convicted that this was the right theme for the retreat. First year student, Maggie Lage, would agree. She shared, "I loved Saturday evening after Reconciliation and Exposition which was held outdoors. Everyone was so full of the Holy Spirit! We all went inside for dancing together and it was just so joy-filled, it was like we were dancing together before the Lord! I didn't want the night to end!"

Retreats hold fond memories for many of our alumni and are often described as the turning point of their involvement at the Newman Center. James is no exception. He remembers his freshmen year being scared to get involved, then finding a loving and supportive community at Newman that was happy to be on fire for Jesus. "BEHOLD is my favorite retreat of my Newman years," he says, "I remember being stressed that I had to make everything run smoothly, so I took that to prayer Friday night and just felt like ocean waves were rushing over me and the word 'trust' kept coming to me. I realized I just needed to abandon my stress and hold on to my trust that God would provide the graces each



student needed to have a great experience- I didn't have to manufacture moments for everyone else." Another moment that stood out to James was the 7:30am Saturday morning optional Holy Hour where over thirty students attended, "The door to the space was an old wooden door and very creaky when it was opened, I just kept hearing it opening over and over- making it sound like a creaky door to Heaven, drawing people to Him."

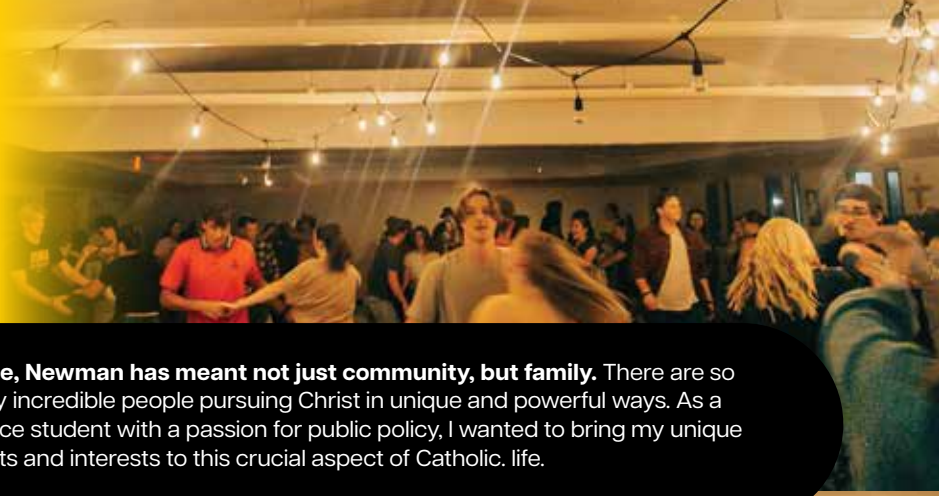
Another first-year student, Annie Knipper, emphasized the strong sense of community fostered by the retreat. "I knew many people before just from being at Newman, but now I feel I have formed deeper, more authentic friendships," she said, particularly praising her small group led by Anna Lammers. Their acceptance and support and especially encouraging her to go deeper in her encounter with Jesus during Exposition.

"When I came to Iowa from a Catholic high school, I didn't want to continue my faith; I was sure I wanted different experiences. I met some Newman students this summer while working at Catholic Youth Summer Camp and they invited me to be a part of the Newman community. I told them I wasn't sure that was for me. Again, on the first day of *OnIowa!*, several of them texted me to invite me to volleyball on the Pentacrest. Still a no for me. Then my plans fell through and I ended up at the volleyball event," she laughs, "Maybe Divine intervention? I am so glad this community invited me in and I said yes to the retreat and to Newman."

"Retreats give such joy," James reflects, acknowledging their transformative power in his life, "I don't know where I would be without my retreat experiences- both participating and leading." James is discerning a vocation with the Jesuits and currently navigating the application process.



Student Fellows



Ellie Hyten
Service and Social Justice



Logan Shearer
Advocacy

To me, Newman has meant not just community, but family. There are so many incredible people pursuing Christ in unique and powerful ways. As a finance student with a passion for public policy, I wanted to bring my unique talents and interests to this crucial aspect of Catholic life.



Andrew Simaz
Liturgical Ministry



Katrina Aljets
Liturgical Music



James Allbright
Faith Formation



Brenna Schwamberger
Prayer and Worship

Being a part of the Newman Center has provided me with a community that is dedicated to helping each other strive toward sainthood, and being able to find such a community in college has truly been life changing! Since becoming the Prayer and Worship Fellow, my prayer life has deepened substantially. **The opportunity to help lead others into a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer is something I will cherish forever!**



Liv Jackson
Outreach



Emily Kolich
Outreach



Sarah Lumpa
Communications

I got involved at the beginning of my second semester at the University. I love the Newman Center because it, and everyone there, have made a difference in my life, but also I have been able to do the same for the people around me. **I have learned so much about my faith and have fallen in love with the Catholic faith on a level that I didn't even know was possible.**



Go Out... And Serve Others!

Students Participate in Service and Social Justice Opportunities



Ellie Hyten, junior
Service and Social Justice

I chose to serve as the Service and Social Justice Fellow because I have always had a passion for giving back to my community and inspiring others to do the same. This year, our team is focusing on building the culture of life here in Iowa City. We are advocating for the unborn, helping those in need, building relationships with senior citizens, and finding ways to care for many forgotten groups in today's society.

We have hosted several amazing events this year; a Red Cross Blood Drive, Christian Healthcare Ethics seminar, and Pro-Life night. Additionally, we have participated in various service opportunities in our local area; including volunteering at Birthright, praying at the 40 Days for Life vigil, and helping at Agape Cafe. There are many more events on the horizon including a speaker night focused on the Shelter House where we will learn about how to encounter those in need, meal preparation at the Ronald McDonald House, and our annual canned food drive in December for those in need in our area and at the University. Our students are always looking for ways to get involved, and it has been so beautiful to see the impact we are making in our Iowa City community through the Newman Center.

Serving as Service and Social Justice fellow has been fruitful in countless ways. It has allowed me to pour into my Newman community while also going out and making a difference in the Iowa City community. I am so grateful that God placed this opportunity in front of me. It is such a gift to give back to Newman since it has given so much to me!



Student leaders hosted a Pro-Life event early this semester and involved local pro-life organizations to speak.

Pictured (Left to Right): Carrie Field, Ellie Hyten, Art Gilloon (Dubuque County Right to Life), Sheryl Schwager (Johnson County Right to Life), Sophia Claus, Matthew Fanning (Informed Choices), Hayley Abdo, Hianca Andrades.



Students listen to Dr. Kaldjian speak during first "Christian Healthcare Ethics Seminar" of the semester. This is the second year that Newman has hosted the healthcare ethics seminar.



Students take photo after engaging with those in a local retirement community.

Pictured (Left to Right): Lydia Wee, Morgan Lally, Sarah Moreland, Aaron Sanchez, Nathan Seiler (FOCUS)

Left: Fall Semester Blood Drive student volunteers assist by checking in blood donors for appointments.

Pictured (Left to Right): Valle Leggett and Alissa Brummer



Music Ministry



As Music Fellow, my role is to lead the Sunday Choir and help with other music events such as preparing and leading music for retreats! I wanted to serve in this position this year because I wanted to give back to the Newman Center after all that it has given me, specifically, through the music ministry. I have gained a lot of perspective into what it takes to make the Newman Center operate and have been able to grow in friendship with many new people!

- Katrina Aljets, Junior



Experiencing Worship Through Music

By Anna Kelly, Director of Liturgical Music

We have been blessed this year to have an abundance of interest in the music ministry. In collaboration with the students, we decided to add an additional choir to our roster: the Iowa Praise Collective. Last year, once a month, we would have a few students who wanted to perform praise and worship music during the Wednesday night student adoration. As the year went on, they increasingly wanted to do more activities together. Thanks to the addition of the Music Fellow this academic year, we were able to accommodate their wishes, and the Iowa Praise Collective is off to a great start. This group debuted their skills as part of the fall retreat where they led music during Adoration. In the future, this group will continue to minister during student adoration times at the Newman Center and will be doing outreach to local schools and parishes in hope of bringing all the wonderful things that we experience through worship music at the Newman Center to those in our community.

The excitement surrounding this new choir has trickled over into our other choirs as well. The Gregorian Chant Choir has almost doubled in membership from last year, and is currently working on music for the All-Saints Day Mass. Our Sunday Choir, under the direction of Music Fellow, Katrina Aljets, ministered successfully for the first time at Mass in early October. They will continue to lead music at the 9am and 11am Masses on the first Sunday of every month.

In addition to our Choir, we have also continued our free music lessons for students from last year. We currently have over 16 students enrolled in piano, guitar, or voice lessons. It is so wonderful to see the increasing number of students who desire to serve their community as musicians and are willing to put in the work that is needed to make it truly sacred and special.

Alumni Corner

with Ethan and Dana (Ruffatto) Schmidt



ETHAN: For myself, the most impactful aspect of the Newman Center was the community. The Holy Spirit is alive and active at Newman. I am blessed to have received His call (more specifically) my freshmen year of college, and am continuing to respond. Becoming active at the Newman Center in simple things: sports, meals, game nights, etc. lead to my re-conversion back to a practicing Catholic. All it took was a simple invite after a Thursday Night Mass from a FOCUS missionary. First to play spikeball, then to a Bible study, and then all the dominoes began to fall. I am eternally grateful for Newman and all the staff, missionaries, and student leaders who make it a place to encounter our blessed Lord.

DANA: As a Freshman, far away from home and family, The Newman Center quickly became my home away from home. Yet, back then I didn't have the slightest clue just how significantly the Newman Center would nourish my life. One of most impactful aspects of the Newman Center was that it allowed me proximity to the Eucharist, something I had never thought to seek before. Newman's Daily Mass and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament led me to fall in love with Jesus in the Eucharist which continually transforms my life. The other profound impact was made through the community. Through the people I met and friendships I made, I learned how to be a disciple of Christ, how to better love my neighbors, and how to adopt lifelong mission! I am eternally grateful for the Newman Center and the people who foster and support students in their journey with the Church.



The most unexpected blessing of our time at the Newman Center was meeting each other. We met while playing volleyball with a group of students we knew through Newman. We quickly bonded over our devotion to our faith, our love of our families, goals for the future, and our interest in sports. These are all things that play major parts in our relationship today. To grow in intimacy with Christ throughout college was the best preparation for married life with one another. 3 months ago, Father Jeff celebrated our wedding Mass, which leads us to the present! Nowadays we can be found a couple hours away in West Des Moines; here Dana works as a registered nurse and Ethan as a retirement consultant. We



are new parishioners at the Basilica of St. John and have become more and more involved in our local Catholic community. Ethan now leads a weekly Men's group/bible study, and Dana regularly attends a women's Bible study. Otherwise, we'll be playing pickup volleyball, watching Hawkeye football, or sharing a meal with friends!

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GIVING TUESDAY

December 3, 2024



Your gift gives the power to make a positive change in the lives of college students at the University of Iowa. Help students to know Jesus and His Church and make Him known to others through a gift to our mission!

