



**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 4, 2016**

Welcome to Ames UCC! Worship is the way we praise God and learn what it means to be a Christian. Services of worship are just that: a way that we serve the power that calls us together and sends us out to be the eyes, hands, and feet of justice in the world. We hope that you leave today feeling connected, renewed, and in relationship with the holy.

In keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, we joyfully and unconditionally welcome all people of any age, gender, race, culture, ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity into our community of faith and affirm the worth of all people as unique individuals made in God's image. We are open to the special gifts that each person brings and invite each one to participate in the life of our church.

Our deacon for today is Kim Spangler; our greeters and ushers are Kermit Dirks, Trudy Dirks, Debi Ford, Steve Rogers-Smith. We have no one scheduled today for building lockup.

GREETINGS

During the season of Advent we suspend oral announcements at the beginning of worship. Please see your bulletin, the weekly e-newsletter, our Facebook page, and the Courier newsletter. To sign up for one or all, e-mail office@amesucc.org.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Passing the Peace is an ancient Christian tradition in which we show we carry no weapons, only love.

CALL TO WORSHIP

A formal and mutual invitation to move into the worship experience.

One: God is gracious and merciful!

Many: Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love! Amen.

HYMN "Now Bless the God of Israel," Hymn 110

Singing is one way to connect to God through our bodies. We stand up, breathe deep, and let loose. And as Augustine wrote, "(S)he who sings, prays twice."

INVOKING THE HOLY

God is always with us, so this "invoking" or invitation to God, is really an invitation to our own selves to become aware of that constant presence.

One: God, we have nothing to fear from you. Bring us back into your presence, rejoicing in your promises and basking in your mercy. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Confession has a long tradition in Christian history. It is a way to name our own brokenness and failing, sometimes generically and sometimes quite specifically, as a means to cleanse our hearts as we move through the service.

One: We confess our brokenness before God and one another. Incarnate God,

Many: We confess that we are often too preoccupied

to notice your presence among us,

to share the wonder of your indwelling,

and to proclaim the mystery that is your healing.

Forgive us for being centered on our own drama,

our imagined crises,

and our inability to deal with life's challenges.

Bring us back to you, our life and our healer. Amen.

SILENT PERSONAL CONFESSION

A brief moment to reflect on the prayer and your own heart and life. Silence is as important as noise in our dialogue with the divine.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

As a people of Easter, there is always good news: when we die to our brokenness, we live again in hope.

One: God is with us, bringing forgiveness, hope and reminding us that we walk always in the streams of life eternal. No sin, no distraction, no misstep is great enough to separate us from the love of God. Rejoice! Amen.

CHILDREN'S CELEBRATION "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"

Children are very important to our church. Each service they come forward for a special lesson just for them. We want all children to know they are welcome everywhere in our sanctuary, even – especially – at the very front. We sing the song below as they come forward.



Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - rael, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep - herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward.

OUR ADVENT WREATH: THE CANDLES OF HOPE AND PEACE

The Uitermarkt Family

Based on Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Silent Preparation

Prayer

One: We are God's gathered people.

Many: And so come to this moment filled with holy hope.

One: May justice roll down

Many: And peace flow like a mighty river around the world.

One: May equity be the reality for generations yet to come

Many: And may peace flow throughout humanity, as it did with the One.

One: The One who was sent here, the One who sent us, the One whose power never fails

Many: Peace is possible and we are resolved today to believe.

For if God be for us,

then anything we dream of can be a reality.

We light these candles as we proclaim hope and peace around the world.

We stand together,

from one end of the Earth to the other,

knowing God is with us.

Hope and Peace are Kindled

Silent Response to Hope and Peace

Sung Response to Hope and Peace

**All: O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

HEBREW BIBLE Joel 2:12-13, 28-29 (New Revised Standard Version) Phil Spike
We use "Hebrew Bible" instead of "Old Testament" out of respect for our Jewish sisters and brothers (it isn't old to them) and acknowledgement of the living voice still found in these ancient stories.

Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

SERMON

HYMN OF REFLECTION "Comfort, Comfort O My People," Hymn 101

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Please share your prayer needs as you are so moved.

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

The basics of the Lord's Prayer appear in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. It may be familiar to you in this form, or with "sins" or "trespasses" toward the end. We also support the use of traditional or contemporary language for addressing the holy and naming the holy's realm.

Our Father/Creator who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom/kin-dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts/trespasses as we forgive our debtors/those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom/kin-dom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

OFFERING

"Visit Us, Emmanuel"

Pepper Choplin

Chancel Choir

Our financial gifts go to support the work and mission of our church. Loose coins and bills are sent to mission partners like Food at First and Youth and Shelter Services. Checks and cash placed in envelopes, unless otherwise designated, go to the church proper to help keep our ministries (like worship, youth group, and Godly Play) vital. If you would like to sign up for electronic giving, please visit amesucc.org/give

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

HYMN OF SENDING

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" (insert)

BENEDICTION

From the Latin of "well" and "to speak," this is one final good word to send us off. Please join us in the parlor next door for refreshments and fellowship.

December 4, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone or with others; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

God's Story[™] Our Story

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Lord, we have nothing to fear from you. Bring us back into your presence, rejoicing in your promises and basking in your mercy. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Joel 2:12-13

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

We think the Lord demands so much from us. But really, God is making just one simple request: come home to me, my children. I've got something amazing for you!

Consider: Consider this theme for the week's text.

God desires that we turn to God. At this Christmas time, we can remember that love (for God and for others) is all that truly matters.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday: Turn to a Merciful God, Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

Monday: End of Babylonian Captivity, Ezra 1:1-11

Tuesday: Lament over the Ruined Country, Joel 1:1-12

Wednesday: Call to Repentance and God's Response, Joel 1:13-20

Thursday: Dedication of the Temple, Ezra 6:13-22

Friday: Ezra Restores Torah as Law, Nehemiah 8:1-12

Saturday: Dedication of Jerusalem's Wall, Nehemiah 12:27-47

How do God's people respond to God' deliverance?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others.

- What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?
- How is your community of faith preparing for Christmas? What difference will your preparations make in the larger community around you? What can you do to bring hope and renewal to people in need?
- What in your life requires repentance and renewal? Who in your life needs hope? How can you bring hope to those who need it?

Do: By acting on what we learn we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a list of all the things you think you need to do to prepare for Christmas. Add to your list activities or events that give you the opportunity to love God, your neighbor, or yourself. For every love activity you add, remove something less important from your list. See how your holidays are transformed as love activities dominate your season.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill your days with love. Amen.

Ames UCC Online Advent Devotional

In Advent we step into a season of night, a long awaiting for the morning star of Christmas and the blazing sun of Easter. Our daily Advent devotionals this year, then, come from the prayer practice known as the “night office,” found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, among many other well-loved and revered resources. To ensure that you may participate in this prayer, go to our church Facebook page: facebook.com/AmesUCC. A reminder link will be in the weekly e-blast, too. Pray without ceasing, for the light that shines in the darkness will never be put out. –Pr. Eileen

Christmas Books for Kids and Adults - December 4

Children’s Christmas books from the church library are on display in the back of the sanctuary for kids to use during the service. Books for children and adults are on display in the parlor, and available in the library. All books are available for check-out.

December/January Newsletter Articles Due - December 7

Due to the Christmas holidays, there will be a combined December/January Courier newsletter released in mid-December. Submit articles by Wednesday, December 7. Newsletter assembly crew will meet at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14.

Save the Date: Women’s Fellowship - December 14

The only meeting of Women’s Fellowship this month is on December 14. All women of the church are welcome from 12.15-1.15 pm. We will be having an ornament exchange as part of the meeting. If you are bringing a new ornament please keep the price under \$5.00, gently used ornaments are fine and home-made ones are also good. So save the date and share in some holiday cheer with the women of the church.

Christmas Caroling - December 18

Please join your music and pastoral staff for an afternoon of caroling. On Sunday, December 18 we will meet at 3 p.m. at church before heading off to sing the classics for members of our church who are not able to easily leave their homes. We will reconvene at church for tasty treats. Children and youth are most welcome to come along. RSVP to Pr. Hannah by Wednesday, December 14: hannah@amesucc.org, 515-232-9323

Lost and Found

At least 2 people are missing cookie tins which had been taken to the association meeting and never returned. If you know where they might be please contact Barbara Faidley or just bring them to the big kitchen. My tins are ones I brought home from Europe. The others have been in a family for many years. Please help! –Barbara Faidley

Thank you for making our Advent Party a success!





Calendar for the Week

Wednesday, December 7

Newsletter deadline

- 8:30 a.m. Bible Study
- 9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew
- 12:00 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers
- 2:05 p.m. Wednesday Afternoon Club
- 6:45 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 8

- 10:00 a.m. Ames Area Religious Leaders
- 1:00 p.m. Pastor Parish Relations Committee

Saturday, December 10

- 11:20 a.m. Meals on Wheels (Dohrmann)

Sunday, December 11

- 9:15 a.m. Learning Center
- 9:15 a.m. Godly Play and Sunday School
- 10:30 a.m. Worship
- 5:00 p.m. Youth Group

Be In Touch with Ames UCC

217 6th Street, Ames, IA 50010

515-232-9323

Mon 8:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Tues-Thurs 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

24-hour pastoral emergencies:

515-428-1779

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