



**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 11, 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 Donna Starck; our greeters and ushers are Kermit Dirks, Trudy Dirks, Debi Ford, and Sue Lamont. 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 Emma Johnson

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

One: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord!

Many: **My whole being shall exult in my God! Amen.**

HYMN "Arise Your Light Is Come," Hymn 164

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 Ryan Johnson

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: You love justice and hate wrongdoing, O Lord. Plant within us this same love for what is right, that we might live it and be a beacon of your heavenly light.
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.

OUR ADVENT WREATH: THE CANDLES OF HOPE, PEACE, AND JOY

Eli Heginger

Based on Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46b-55

Silent Preparation

Prayer

One: We are God's gathered people. There are some blessings that are only revealed to us when the day is darkest. There are some graces that are only glimpsed when the night is the longest.

**Many: There are some mercies that only shine
when the shadows are deepest.**

One: In Advent, we remember the darkest days

Many: and await the brilliant light of hope.

One: In Advent, we remember the thirsty days

Many: and await the quenching light of peace.

One: In Advent, we remember the silent days

Many: and await the singing light of joy.

One: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God...who will come and save you."

Many: Our souls magnify the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God, our Savior.

Hope, Peace, and Joy are Kindled

Silent Response to Hope, Peace, and Joy

Sung Response to Hope, Peace, and Joy

**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 Isaiah 61:1-11 (NRSV) Asher Suski and Ella Suski
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.

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;
but you shall be called priests of the LORD,
you shall be named ministers of our God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.
Because their shame was double,
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,
therefore they shall possess a double portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

FROM THE MANGER

Cast of Children (in order of appearance)

Narrator: Sarah Frank

Donkey: Celia Schrag

Readers: Eliana Briseno, Elliott Coffey, Erin Frank

Mary: Annelise Johnson

Joseph: Oliver Watts

Innkeeper: Grace Heginger

Baby Jesus: Harris Rayzor

Angels: Adela Johnson, Adeline O'Neal, Grace Heginger

Littlest Angels: Annie Rayzor, Mariela Briseno, Annalynn Watts

Shepherds: Eli Schrag, Elliott Coffey, Celia Schrag, Ailis Shenk Cook

Animals: Reese Johnson, Lucy Hannover

Star: Eliana Briseno

3 Wiseboys: Oliver Comstock, Brecken Johnson, Will Hannover

Credit to Sunny Stewart for writing and composing "One Bright Star". Special thanks to Sunny, Genya Coffey, and Emily Kenneke for their assistance is rehearsing with the children, and to the chancel choir for singing with us!

HYMN OF REFLECTION “Love Came Down at Christmas,” Hymn 165

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

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 “Go Tell It on the Mountain,” Hymn 154

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 11, 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.

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

You love justice and hate wrongdoing, O Lord. Plant within us this same love for what is right, that we might live it and be a beacon of your heavenly light. Through Jesus our Lord, Amen.

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

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. Isaiah 61:10-11

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Isaiah's words are music to an exiled Israel's ears. Could it be that deliverance was just around the corner? Time to put away weeping, people of God—if you only knew what goodness is coming your way!

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

In many ways, we are living a world where God's promises have already come to pass.

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

Sunday: Spirit of the Lord upon Me, Isaiah 61:1-11

Monday: God Is Gracious, Isaiah 63:7-14

Tuesday: Prayer of Repentance, Isaiah 63:15-64:12

Wednesday: New Creation, Isaiah 65:17-25

Thursday: Edom's Betrayal and Israel's Restoration, Obadiah 1:1-21

Friday: Jerusalem's Victory, Zechariah 12:1-13:1

Saturday: The Coming Messenger, Malachi 3:1-7

God's Story[™]

Our Story

In what ways has creation been made new already?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others.

- What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?
- Is yours a God of freedom or of bondage? How does the distinction shape your worship, prayer, work, relationships, desires and ambitions? How will you speak of God to those who do not yet know God?
- What binds you? What prevents you from being all that God has created you to be? What can you do this week to accept God's freedom from the burden of your bondage? Who will you be, and what will you accomplish, knowing that in God you are free to live into the fullness of who God has created you to be and do?

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

Stick a wad of dollar bills (you decide how big) in your wallet, pocket, or purse. Every time you pass a Salvation Army kettle, put in a dollar. As you do, remember God's spirit lives in you. Every positive act you do for the world helps make it the new creation God desires.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God bless you abundantly with God's Holy Spirit. Amen.

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. Come 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

Can you help provide treats for caroling? Visit <http://bit.ly/2hoor7z> to sign up.

He's Worth It by Genya Coffey

I was just upstairs doing a little lesson planning and realized I hadn't heard any sounds from Elliott in quite a long time. I usually worry when things get "too quiet" but was very pleasantly surprised to see him engrossed in reading his children's Bible. I'm so thankful to have our church as such an important part of Elliott's growing spiritual life. Heading over to our church website where I set up my automatic giving pledge and raising it by 5% because I want to make sure we're here for Elliott as he grows. He's worth it.

To set up your own recurring gift, just go to amesucc.org/give and follow the link at the top of the page. Your Elliot is worth it and so are you and yours.



Calendar for the Week

Tuesday, December 13

12:00 p.m. Men's Fellowship
5:00 p.m. Staff Worship Planning

Saturday, December 17

9:30 a.m. Food at First
11:20 a.m. Meals on Wheels (Clark)

Wednesday, December 14

8:30 a.m. Bible Study
9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew
12:00 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers
1:00 p.m. Newsletter Crew
2:05 p.m. Wednesday Afternoon Club
6:45 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 18

9:15 a.m. Learning Center
9:15 a.m. Godly Play and Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Worship
3:00 p.m. Caroling
5:00 p.m. Youth Group

Thursday, December 15

1:00 p.m. Library Work 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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