



UCC COURIER

United Church of Christ

217 Sixth St. Ames, IA 50010

**ISSUE 250
DECEMBER 2013**

515-232-9323

www.amesucc.org

office@amesucc.org



December 1 Advent Party 4:00 p.m.

Everyone is invited to join in our annual ADVENT PARTY! Meet in Fellowship Hall at 4 p.m. for crafts, decorating sugar cookies, and, PIZZA! Also, we will decorate the church building for Christmas! Come and lend a hand decorating the sanctuary, putting the tree up, and making our church home look festive for the holiday! See you on December 1!



December 8 Children's Christmas Program 10:45 a.m.

Don't miss out this year on Sunday, December 8 as the children have already been memorizing lines, picking out costumes, and learning some simple staging for their program, "A Sign for All"! Seeing the excitement of the children as they tell the story of the night Jesus was born will bring the magic of Christmas to us all!

December 8 Congregational Meeting following worship

We will discuss and vote on the 2014 budget and nominations for team leaders and officers for 2014. The meeting will be brief.

December 15 Chancel Christmas Program 10:45 a.m.

December 18 Christmas Caroling 5:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual Christmas caroling as we visit church members and sing our favorite hymns. There will be warm drinks in Fellowship Hall when we return!

December 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7:00 p.m.

December 25 Christmas Day Worship 9:30 a.m.



FROM THE PASTOR



As the first snowflakes began to fall this past month, they brought a big smile to my face. I do love winter. Sure, there are some drawbacks: the dry skin, the tough driving conditions, high heating bills. But even with all of that, I would not trade winter weather for anything. I love the feeling of cold against my face, getting bundled up in warm clothes, hot drinks, roaring fires, and of course, the holiday season. That period between Thanksgiving and Epiphany is so full of traditions and family get-togethers, and it is also a wonderful time for church.

Advent, the church season leading up to Christmas, begins on Sunday December 1 when we sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" to open worship. Later that day is the annual Advent Party, complete with Christmas cookies and decorating the church for the season. December 8 is our Children's Christmas pageant. On December 15 the choir will perform their holiday concert, and that Wednesday December 18 will be our Christmas Caroling tradition when we bring good cheer to members all over Ames. The season culminates with our candlelight Christmas Eve service, followed by our casual Christmas morning worship at 9:30 a.m. on December 25. Be sure to mark your calendar and to celebrate the season with us!

Every year there are those Christians who lament the secularization of the Christmas season and the ruining of Advent, which, according to purists, is the time of penitence and fasting in preparation for Christmas. I say, nonsense. While the season can be overly focused on materialism, it is also a time of giving. So many non-profits, both locally and nationally, depend on the generosity of Christmas time for their financial health. People seem more conscious of the needs of others this time of year, especially those who are going through hard times. Christmas so often brings out the best in people, whether they go to church or not, and that is a wonderful thing. The church can be a force for real good in society, and it is never more evident than this time of year.



Along those lines, I would encourage all of you to write a note to someone this holiday season who has lost a loved one, either recently or not. This time of year can be hardest for those who are mourning. A simple note to say that you are praying for them and thinking of them can make a big difference. Surprise someone with the spirit of Christmas. Be a vehicle of grace. Oh, and remember to bundle up. It's cold outside!

—Jonathan Page

From the Minister to Children and Youth

Three months ago when we started advertising our new ministry, WAC (Wednesday Afternoon Club), I wasn't sure what to expect. I had hopes that we could gather at least a handful of our children after school for a time of snack, Bible stories, crafts, games and music and my expectations were not only met, but have been far surpassed! We have 12 children coming to WAC every week and we are having a blast!

Several of you have helped out by supplying the snack for after school. In January, I will have another sign up for people to help support us in this way. A HUGE "Thank-You" goes to Stacey Jones Cloutier for helping me co-lead WAC and to Sally Shaffer for teaching hand chimes each week (you will get to hear our musical debut in worship on December 22). Also, thank you to Stacey, Carl Tipton, and Jon Page for picking up children at the school and bringing them to the church each week. I could not do this alone!

That leads me to asking you to consider volunteering to help next semester. With Jon leaving, I will need another driver. I am always looking for people to come in a share a passion of theirs with us during our mini-course time or to just be present with us. The next time you walk through the parlor, make sure you stop and look at the new art work displayed! There is an awesome piece of art work that was made by our children at WAC! A special thanks to Ellen and Steve Barnhart for helping orchestrate the art project and the frame!

--Hannah Hannover



Christian Education Team

Learn Something New Every Sunday at Learning Center Adult Forum

The program begins at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Come early for continental breakfast of doughnuts, pastries, bagels, coffee, tea and juice at 9 a.m. The breakfast is supported by a free will offering.

- * December 1 – no program
- * December 8 – Cari McPartland, Social Services Director of the Ames Service Center of the Salvation Army, will explain services provided in Ames and the need remaining for bell ringers.
- * December 15 – Representatives from The Compassionate Friends of Story County Area will discuss coping with loss during the holidays. The organization is for parents of a deceased child or children.
- * December 22 – no program
- * December 29 – no program
- * January 5 – Chris Martin, Food at First director, will give an update on services including the Free Market open two days a week at 116 Washington, the FAF vegetable garden and effects of cutback in SNAP.
- * January 12 --Journeys of Faith

Insight Study Group Explores *Embracing Emergence Christianity: Phyllis Tickle on the Church's Next Rumage Sale*

Author, historian, cultural observer and our next Theologian-in-Residence, Phyllis Tickle, examines the changing face of Christianity and culture in six DVD sessions. Tickle surveys 2000 years of Western history, identifying the great upheavals that occur in Western culture and Christianity every 500 years. The last was the Great Reformation of the 1500s; the next is happening now. What are the implications of this Great Emergence, both culturally and spiritually? What are the key questions and issues that need to be addressed? Where might we be headed next? And, perhaps most importantly, where are you, at this moment? Might you be an emergence Christian?

- ◆ January 16 - Emergence 101
 - ◆ January 23 - Where Now is the Authority?
 - ◆ January 30 - The 20th Century and Emergence
 - ◆ February 6 - Gifts from Other Times
 - ◆ February 13 - How Then Shall We Live?
 - ◆ February 20 - Hallmarks of Emergence
- Join us on Thursdays at 3 p.m. in Room 104.
--Ellen Barnhart



The church library is off the parlor in the northwest corner of the church.

Library News

Visit the first **Bread and Books** display in the church parlor on December 1 before and after worship. Check out the new monthly picks and look at some of the many Christmas books in the church library. We will have some of our new books on display and available for check out. Visit the display for books and some pumpkin bread or other sweet bread.

Picks of the Month

Lynette Spicer and Barbara Faidley picked our special books for this month. They are displayed in the church parlor. These picks of the month are always available for check-out from the church library. Take the card from the book, sign your name and put the card in the basket next to the phone in the church library.

Book Review

“The Unicorn at the Manager” by Roger L. Robbenolt

The stories are told from the viewpoint of the author, a retired United Church of Christ minister. These imaginative tales can be read by adults or aloud to children. This is a touching, spirited Christmas book. It is a collection of interwoven stories around the creation of a new crèche (manger scene) for a special Christmas service. Each of the animals becomes an inspiration for a story. The manger scene was the typical scene but each year a special animal is added and that is when their story is

told. Each of the tales show how each animal played an important role in the birth and life of Jesus. The stories include “The Lion Who Feared”, “The Tortoise Who Carried the Covenant” and “The Saga of the Sad-eyed Pup.” Check this book out of the Ames UCC library west of the parlor and enjoy the magical time of Christmas.

-- Review by Barbara Faidley

Children’s Book Review

“*The Give-Away (A Christmas Story)*” by Ray Buckley

The give-away in varying forms is a widespread practice among Native American people. It is both a physical event and a spiritual concept. When you give something away, it is a thing of honor. In this story the Native American animals are prepared to offer their most precious gifts, even at the cost of their own lives, to restore humanity. In the end, the Creator is the one who decides to give himself away. He said he needed to become small. “How can this be?” asked the animals. “A baby will be born. He will be the Son of the Great Mystery. He will bring light into confusion. He will bring hope into despair. He will bring love, and his name will be great.” He will be born not where the Two-Leggeds are gathered, but among the Four-Leggeds and Those Who Fly. The birth of Jesus in a stable signified a lowly birth but also a birth in the presence of the Four-Leggeds. The message of Jesus becomes one not only of restoring humanity to God, and human-to-human, but also of restoring humanity to “all our relations” (animals, birds, insects and plants). The artwork in the book is done by the author. It reflects a variety of North American wildlife and plants. While not a story from Native traditions, the art includes designs inspired by various tribes. This is a unique Christmas story that can be found in the Ames UCC library.

-- Review by Barbara Faidley

Evangelism Team

Calling all candy makers! The Evangelism Team needs your help now that our Welcome Teams are offering homemade fudge when paying Sunday afternoon visits to new Ames residents. You can help by volunteering to prepare a batch of fudge or whatever type of candy you make during the holidays. Please contact Jan Bauer at (515) 292-3739 or bauerjan@yahoo.com for more details.

Still, the easiest and perhaps most important thing you can do on behalf of our evangelism effort is to welcome and introduce yourself to people you do not know before, during and after worship service Sunday mornings. Let them know how happy you are that they chose to worship with us. This is what will bring people back to Ames UCC.

Financial Stewardship Team

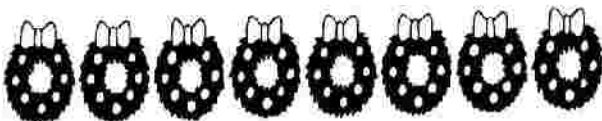
What is a pledge to the church?

A pledge is your commitment to make a financial gift that supports the mission of Ames UCC-Congregational. Pledging is a statement of thanksgiving for the abundance in our own lives. Your pledge supports everything we experience -- worship, pastoral care, education programs, social-outreach programs, building maintenance and more. In addition, part of your pledge supports the regional, state, national and world missions of the United Church of Christ.

Why pledge to the church?

Pledges are critical because they enable the Financial Stewardship Team to plan responsibly and to establish an operating budget for the coming year, just as you might establish a personal budget based on your expected income. We also believe pledging is an important Christian spiritual practice, enabling us to grow intentionally in gratitude and generosity in every part of our lives. Funds collected in the offering each week and donations generously given do significantly support the mission of Ames UCC and are greatly appreciated, however our pledges honor the reality that only with significant funding can we fully become the vibrant community of worship, program life, and human-service ministries God calls us to be.

If you have not yet pledged, please take time to reflect on the many ways we serve God together and to prayerfully consider making a pledge of financial support to the church for the coming year.



Pledge Campaign:

Be sure to get your
2014 Pledge cards
in to the church
if you have not
already!!

Member Services Team

Share Your Christmas Traditions at Women's Fellowship December 4

All women of the church are invited to our monthly fellowship time. We will meet on Wednesday, December 4 at noon in Fellowship Hall for a brown bag lunch and discussion. Get in the holiday spirit as we all talk about our family's Christmas traditions. We can all share one thing that is special, that we do every year or maybe it will be something we did as kids that was a tradition. We hope you can join us for brown bag lunch and the discussion. We try to keep our fellowship time to an hour so we can get back to work on time.

December Young Adult's Meetup

The Young Adult's group was held November 14 in fellowship hall. There were about a dozen in attendance as we made pizzas and just got to know each other better. A special thank you to Griffin Richards for providing the evening's entertainment.

For December, we invite 20 and 30 somethings to an ISU women's basketball game on Thursday, December 12 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$6/person if we can get a group of 10 or more to attend. Not a basketball fan? The group plans to eat a Jeff's Pizza at 5:30 prior to the game so plan on joining us!

Please contact Tee Thomas at terisathomas@hotmail.com or Rachel Jones at rachel.jones@webfilings.com. Please let us know immediately if you plan to attend the game. **Save the date!** January 16 is the date. Watch for more information in early January about the place and time!

Connection Groups

The Member Services Team is in the process of gathering ideas and meeting places for small connection groups for people with similar interests. Some of the ideas we have received so far are groups related to crafts, to music, to theological texts, to exercise, to baking and general interest in getting to know people without a group theme! If you are interested in coordinating a connection group, or would like to host a group in your home, please contact Tee Thomas terisathomas@hotmail.com or Allison Anderson ast1961@gmail.com We hope to get these groups off the ground after the first of the year. We think it will be a great way to beat the winter doldrums.

Social Justice & Outreach Team



Angel Tree

An angel tree in the parlor will display the wishes of families who use People Place services. To be an angel, select a tag, purchase the item and return it wrapped with the tag by December 15. You may leave gifts in the parlor or the church office. People Place will deliver the gifts to the families.

People Place provides programs to help families build on their strengths and develop new strengths. People Place believes children grow best in families, and families grow best in communities that invest in them. People Place is a family resource center of Lutheran Services in Iowa and is located on the second floor in the educational wing of the Ames UCC.



Sun., December 22
UCC Special Offering

The Christmas Fund offering (sometimes called Veterans of the Cross offering) is an expression of appreciation and caring to those who served as clergy (and certain lay employees) who are now retired or disabled and financially strained.

During this holy time of year, the offering is a profound gift. It helps provide pension supplements, health premium subsidies, and emergency

assistance to active or retired clergy families, and Christmas gift checks to hundreds of retirees and to those who disabled.

This Christmas Eve we will collect money for Emergency Residence Project, our local Ames homeless shelter. Help support this important community ministry at a time when warm shelter is desperately needed in Story County.

Ames Area Alternative Gift Market Open at UCC and Wheatsfield Grocery

Alternative gifts and gift cards will be available at Ames UCC on December 8 and 15 in the parlor after Sunday worship. The Ames Area Alternative Gift Market (AGM) will hold its 23rd market on December (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and December 14 (10 a.m. to 12 noon) at Wheatsfield Cooperative Grocery. The Ames market is sponsored by nine local congregations and is organized by a committee of representatives from those congregations, including the Ames United Church of Christ. The Ames Area Alternative Gift Market is one of the most successful of more than 300 gift markets nationwide.

If you would like more information or want to help, contact Ingrid Anderson to help make this year's AGM a success! Home phone (515) 233-6427, cell phone (515) 441-2135, e-mail ingrideba@me.com.



Book Club

Please join us on Wednesday, December 18 at 2 p.m. in the church library west of the parlor. We are reading and discussing the novel ***“The Art of Racing in the Rain”*** by Garth Stein. (Multiple copies are available in the Ames Public Library Book Club collection.) This book is told from the dog’s point of view. On the eve of his death, Enzo (a dog) takes stock of his life, recalling all that he and his family have been through. Enzo knows he is different from other dogs: a philosopher with a nearly human soul. He has educated himself by watching television extensively, and by listening very closely to the words of his master, Denny Swift, an up-and-coming race car driver. Through Denny, Enzo has gained tremendous insight into the human condition, and he sees that life, like racing, isn't simply about going fast. Using the techniques needed on the race track, one can successfully navigate all of life's ordeals. We hope you can join us in the discussion of this unique book as Enzo looks at the wonders and absurdities of human life---as only a dog could tell it. Please note the

books marked with *Multiple copies are available in the Ames Public Library Book Club collection. Books may be checked out for six weeks.

- **January 15 -- Sarah's Key***by Tatiana de Rosnay (2011 novel, 400 pages) Discussion leader: Nancy Marks
- **February 19 -- The Year We Left Home: A Novel***by Jean Thompson (2012 novel, 352 pages) Discussion leader: Allen Trenkle 2013 All Iowa Reads book
- **March 19 -- Parsnips in the Snow: Talks with Midwestern Gardeners** by Jane Anne Staw and Mary Swander (1990 non-fiction, 223 pages) Discussion leader: Lynette Spicer
- **April 16 -- The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*** by Rebecca Skloot (2011 nonfiction, 400 pages) Discussion leader: Nancy Marks
- **May 21 -- Deep Down** by Deborah Coates (2013 novel, 304 pages) Discussion leader: Christa Andersen

Find a synopsis of the books at <http://www.amesucc.org/BookClub>.



ISU Student Advent Gathering - December 5, 7:00 pm 309 Hickory Drive

All undergraduate and graduate students are warmly invited to a church Advent Party. Join us for tasty food and refreshments and Christmas tree decorating. All students are welcome. Contact Jon (jon@amesucc.org) if you need to arrange a ride.

Watercolor Exhibition in the Parlor

Jane Baty currently is exhibiting a number of her watercolor paintings at Ames UCC in the parlor. According to Jane, "There are a variety of subjects. You will see, however, a similarity of style among them." Shape, pattern and color are the focus as she works. One of the paintings Jane chose was of chickens because of their interesting and amusing shapes. "I try to capture attitude in the angles and arrangements of the birds. I mean to keep them recognizable as chickens but realism is not a goal." Likewise, Jane chose a painting of cats, because, "cat eyes are fascinating as are the shapes of their heads and faces as they change from being kittens to full grown cats. Here, too, I feel free to use color and overlap as I see fit." "The florals are more realistic. They suggest real flowers, but are probably impossible hybrids—bred for needed shape and color. "Still Snowing" is the view from my front door on a snowy day." Come take a look at what Jane has created with paper, pigment and water. You will be amazed! All of the paintings are originals and will be displayed from November to December.

In keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, we joyfully and unconditionally welcome all people of any age, gender, race, culture, ability or sexual orientation 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.

United Church Courier

United Church of Christ - Congregational
217 Sixth Street
Ames, IA 50010

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 153
Ames, IA 50010

Return Service Requested

STAFF

Ministers The Reverend Jonathan C. Page, Minister
Hannah Hannover, Children & Youth Minister

Music Director Lesley Lackore
Keyboardist Karen Stewart
Secretary Becky A. Bridges

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Moderator Ken Birt

Team Coordinator Ellen Barnhart
Caring Network Kristin Shields
Christian Education Barbara Faidley
Evangelism Jan Bauer
Financial Stewardship Sharron Slinger
Member Services Allison Anderson
Property Greg Lamont
Social Justice and Outreach Kim Spangler
Worship & Music David White
Association and Conference Delegate Rachel Jones
Treasurer Jim Dickson
Clerk Lynette Spicer