



**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 6, 2015**

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 worship leaders today are Allison Anderson and her granddaughters Eliana and Mariela Briseno (Advent wreath); Kevin Binder (worship leader); Eileen Gebbie (sermon); Hannah Hannover (Children's Celebration); and Rachel Schelle (liturgist).

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Most announcements are also in your bulletin and our weekly e-newsletter. To sign up, 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.

CHORAL INVOCATION OF THE HOLY "Come, Emmanuel, Come" C. Barry
Chancel choir

CANDLE OF PEACE

One: We light this candle of PEACE,

Many: Reflecting on the proclamation of John the Baptist more than 2,000 years ago and working to spread the good news today.

One: We light this candle of peace,

Many: Working toward and crying out for a world where everyone's basic needs are met.

One: We light this candle of peace,

Many: Smoothing the rough ways and making paths in order to end discrimination and persecution.

One: We light this candle of peace,

Many: Awaiting the arrival of Jesus Christ, light of the world. There is darkness everywhere. Be the light.

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

One: The Reign of God is drawing near:

Many: The prophet calls us to change our lives!

One: Prepare the way for the Lord:

Many: A just and peaceful path!

One: Welcome one another, for Christ welcomes you:

Many: For the glory of God!

HYMN “My Soul Gives Glory to My God” (Hymn 119)

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: Holy God, we long for your peace, and trust in your promise; we hear your call to turn toward you, to change our lives and welcome you in. Meet us here and fill our minds with your wisdom and our hearts with your peace, that our worship together may open us to the challenge of your dream of wholeness for all. In the Name of the One who is coming, we pray.

All: 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: Oh God, you call us to turn our lives around, and work with patience and diligence to prepare the way for your Reign, but we get discouraged and give up too soon.

Many: Lord, have mercy.

One: Oh God, you call us to collaborate in community to prepare the way for your Reign, but we neither trust nor honor the gifts of others.

Many: Christ, have mercy.

One: Oh God, you call us to be full of joyful confidence to prepare the way for your Reign, but we burden ourselves with anxiety and fear.

Many: Lord, have mercy.

One: Forgive us, O God, and lead us in the ways of patience, community and joy.

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.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

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

One: Hear the good news: Jesus, healer of brokenness, is present with us in the painstaking work of the Reign of God, forgiving our weakness, rebuilding our relationships, restoring our joy. Let us celebrate this great grace by offering to one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

CHILDREN’S CELEBRATION

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.

K. Stewart

Watch and wait, lis-ten and pray; Je-sus will be born on Christ-mas day.

Watch and wait, lis-ten and pray; Lord, give us peace,

Lord, give us hope to- day.

HEBREW BIBLE Isaiah 40:1-11 (New Revised Standard Version)

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.

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD’s hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

SERMON

HYMN OF REFLECTION “O God of Love, O God of Peace” (Hymn 571)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

If you would like a name on the prayer list, simply contact the pastors.

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 as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom/kin-dom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.

OFFERING

“A Prelude to Advent” F. Chopin, arr. R. E. Schramm
Chancel choir

Your gifts go to support the work and mission of our church. Coins and bills are sent to mission partners like Food at First and Youth and Shelter Services. Checks, 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 contact Katie Bonney for details (office@amesucc.org, 515-232-9323).

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

HYMN OF SENDING “With Joy Draw Water” (Hymn 109)

BENEDICTION

From the Latin of “well” and “to speak,” this is one final good word to send us off.

AMES UCC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Sunday Scriptures

12/13 Rebuilding the Temple, Ezra 1:1-4, 3:1-4,10-13

12/20 Zechariah's Song, Luke 1:5, 57-80

12/27 Beginning of Good News, Mark 1:1-20

1/3 Jesus' Ministry Begun, Mark 1:21-45

Congregational Meeting - Dec. 6

There is a congregational meeting scheduled for Sunday, December 6 following worship. Informational packets including the agenda and proposed meeting items are available in the back of the sanctuary and the parlor.

Ames Alternative Gifts Market - Dec. 6

The Ames Alternative Gifts Market will be available in the parlor after worship on Dec. 6 and Dec. 13. This event provides opportunities to learn about and support projects around the world that relieve poverty and suffering, with options to support thirty different projects around the world. These humanitarian gifts are given in honor of a friend or loved one, perfect for the holidays. The Alternative Gifts Market will also be available at W heatsfield Co-op on Saturday, Dec. 12 between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Women's Fellowship - Dec. 9

In December our one meeting of Women's Fellowship will be on Wednesday, December 9 from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. For this meeting we are asking each person to bring an ornament you have in your home that you are no longer using. Please wrap your ornament and during our meeting we will have an ornament exchange. In addition, we are asking each member to bring new or gently used children's books to donate to Raising Readers of Story County. All the women of the church are invited to come and enjoy some holiday cheer. Hope to see you there.

Caroline Isaacs of AFSC on For-Profit Incarceration - Dec. 9

On Wednesday, Dec. 9 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, see Caroline Isaacs from the American Friends Service Committee talk about her work advocating for incarcerated individuals and their families, improved prison conditions, and reduction of the number of incarcerated people as part of the AFSC's Governing Under the Influence advocacy program.

2015 Children/Youth Christmas Program - Dec. 13

The 2015 Children/Youth Christmas program will focus on "Making Room" - preparing hearts, minds, and spirits to welcome Jesus in the many forms and places in which we encounter him. This year's program explores the nativity scriptures, contemporary accounts of our neighbors without refuge, and the words of our children and youth as they experience the story of Christmas. Please join us in worship on Sunday, December 13 at 10:45 a.m.

"A Christmas Story" Movie Night - Dec. 18

Children and elders and everyone in between are invited to enjoy the timeless story of Ralphie and his quest for a Red Ryder BB gun, his dad's "major award," his brother's poor eating habits, and his mom's love of bunny suits in the Fellowship Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, December 18. If, like Pr. Eileen, you own Ralphie pajamas, please wear them. Very light refreshments will be provided, as well as some interactive surprises.

Cans for Communion - Dec. 20

On the third Sunday of each month we gather together to feast at God's open table. It is a time of reconciliation and renewal, leaving us stronger and spiritually fed.

However, many people in our community (even in our church) struggle with being actually fed. In Story County, 15% of individuals have either low or very low food security. As Iowa State researchers describe, "Low food secure households have difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members. In very low food secure households, the food intake of some household members is reduced and normal eating patterns are disrupted at times during the year due to limited resources."

Starting Sunday, December 20, the Social Justice team and Pr. Eileen invite you to bring canned and other non-perishable goods to our Communion table. Simply place them on or around the table before you take part in the meal. If you are able, bring extras to share with those who are unable to contribute. After worship we will take everything to Food at First for distribution in the community.

God's table is larger than we can imagine. Let us set more places each and every time we feast.

United Church of Christ Christmas Fund - Dec. 20

We will also take a special offering for the Christmas Fund on December 20th. The Christmas fund is an offering that provides financial assistance to retired UCC clergy and lay employees, groups that are historically (and often still) underpaid and unable to save for retirement. This offering funds pension and health premium supplementation, Christmas “thank you” gift checks, and even emergency grants for active or retired clergy and employees.

Christmas Caroling - Dec. 20

Join our Director of Music Lesley Lackore for Christmas Caroling at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 20. We will gather at the church and then go out as a group (or multiple groups) to sing for members of our church community who are not able to easily leave their homes or who are in a care facility. We will then gather back together for tasty treats.

did you know?



2016 Ames UCC Budget

13% Congregational Life & Care
14% Administration
19% Christian Education
29% Worship & Music
12% Evangelism & Stewardship
13% Charitable Giving

29% of your gift makes worship happen,
from the music to the instruments
to the preachers.

You Are Invited: Pastor Parish Relations Committee Training

Monday, January 4, 2016 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Following best practices and our own by-laws, this January 2016 the Executive Committee and Pr. Eileen will form a Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) consisting of three to five congregants. One third will serve a one year term and the remaining a two year term in order to have some continuity heading into January 2017.

Our Associate Conference Minister, The Rev. Brigit Stevens will host a PPRC training at the date and time listed above. Although only a handful of congregants will initially serve, she recommends opening the training to the whole church for the sake of transparency and laying the groundwork for future participants.

Below is an excerpt from “Why You Should Develop a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee” Leader Guide by Roy Oswald (2001, The Alban Institute). Please read through it and consider attending the training. RSVP to Pr. Eileen (eileen@amesucc.org, [515-232-9323](tel:515-232-9323)) by December 24, 2015. Thank you!

“The most important relationship within congregational life is between pastor and members. There are many ways this relationship can get off track. Each party may enter a relationship thinking that it is going to work, and then a few things happen to throw it off track. Now is the time to inject into this situation an effective pastor-parish relations committee. This committee has no decision-making responsibility. Its sole task is to monitor the quality of the relationship between pastor and congregants. It needs to resist becoming an evaluation committee or a salary review and recommendation committee or, worse still, the channel for all the complaints the congregation has about the pastor. Its task is to try to understand, from the pastor’s point of view, what it is like to be the spiritual leader of this particular congregation.”



Theologian in Residence
Weekend at Ames UCC
January 30-31, 2016

**God and Government:
Are Religious Liberties Crumbling?**

With Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and author of *God and Government: Twenty-Five Years of Fighting for Equality, Secularism, and Freedom of Conscience*.

Saturday, January 30, 2016

9:00-10:30 "A Primer on the History of Church and State: It Started in the Schools"
10:45-11:30 "When Political Candidates Step in It*" (*the issue of church and state)
1:15-2:30 "And They Will Be Led by a Child: Predictions for the Future"

Sunday, January 31, 2016

9:00-10:30 Panel Discussion
10:45 Worship

Go to www.amesucc.org/tir for more information and to register for a box lunch catered by The Cafe. **Registration deadline: January 11, 2016**

Calendar for the Week

Tuesday, December 8

12:00 p.m. Men's Fellowship
3:00 p.m. Farm to Folk
5:00 p.m. Worship Planning Team

Wednesday, December 9

8:30 a.m. Morning Bible Study
9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew
12:00 p.m. Women's Fellowship
12:10 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers
2:05 p.m. Wed Afternoon Club
6:45 p.m. Choir Practice

Saturday, December 12

11:20 a.m. Meals on Wheels

Sunday, December 13

9:30 a.m. Learning Center
9:30 a.m. Sunday School
10:45 a.m. Worship Service
6:00 p.m. Youth Group

Be In Touch with Ames UCC

217 6th Street, Ames, IA 50010
515-232-9323

Mondays—Thursdays

8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

24-hour pastoral emergencies:

515-428-1779

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