



**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 13, 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 Johnny and Steve Rogers-Smith (Advent wreath); Adysen Pingel and Eli Heginger (worship leaders); and Pr. Hannah, Amanda Petefish-Schrag, and the children and youth (Christmas program).

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
Trio

CANDLE OF JOY

One: This morning, hear anew the Baptizer's prophetic announcement of the coming of the Messiah and interpret it wisely.

Many: **We need not shrink from the challenge of repentance because when we've been truly rearranged on the inside, we will bear good fruit on the outside.**

One: During these troubling times in our nation and around the world, the question from the crowds still persists, "What then should we do?"

Many: **Once again we humbly dedicate ourselves to kindness, to justice, and to fairness.**

One: On this third Sunday of Advent, we light a candle of JOY, as a visible symbol of these "fruits worthy of repentance."

Many: **Come let us be baptized with winds of the Spirit and refined by the fire of God's word.**

One: Let us, though many, pray in one voice.

Many: **Gracious and loving God,
as we await the coming of the One whom you sent,
grant that our waiting might be the active kind.
Give us the courage to meet the challenge
of altering our thoughts and feelings about the world around us
so that our actions might also be changed.
Help us to keep our priorities straight, our passions properly pointed,
and our eyes fixed upon the prize of joy.
Remind us that you lovingly require evidence of our repentance –
kindness, justice and fairness. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

One: The joy of the season is upon us. The time is almost here.

Many: We have come to praise the Lord!

One: We are here to sing praises to God, the Holy One in whom we place our trust.

Many: God opens our eyes and lifts us up!

One: Let us praise God

Many: who reigns forever!

HYMN "Now Bless the God of Israel" (Hymn 110, verses 1 and 3)

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: We gather, O God, in this worship space mindful of your presence. We are here to rejoice as we wait to see your glory. Help us proclaim the joy you promise. In this hour of worship we ask that you bless us through the inspiration of your Holy Spirit and through the stories of Christ's ministry among us.

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: Here we are, Most Patient God, in the third week of our Advent journey. You alone know how that journey is going. Did we, at the beginning of the season promise to make this Advent different? Did we promise in our heart of hearts to prepare ourselves spiritually to receive the gift of Jesus?

**Many: We confess, O God, that we, so easily,
have given into the expectations of people and situations around us.
We allowed the times of quiet we promised for you to slip away.
Forgive us in our distractions.
Help us renew our preparations for your coming.
We look forward to your promise to change things –
to bring life, and strength and courage to us:
eyes to see, ears to hear, and tongues to speak your word.**

One: So we wait a little longer - moving...at...a...slower...pace and with a great deal more patience.

Many: Continue to be with us, O Lord as we learn to wait with you.

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.

Let us join together in proclaiming God's assurance or pardon.

**Many: We come to you confessing what is on our hearts and minds.
We do so trusting that you want to hear our petitions
and that you have already forgiven what needs to be forgiven.
We believe that our prayers will be answered in your time
and in your almighty wisdom. Amen.**

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM: "Making Room"

Written by Amanda Petefish-Schrag

Children listed in order of appearance.

Scripture Reading

Elliott Coffey, Oscar Chelcea

Innkeepers Chorus

Sarah Frank, Eliana Briseno, Jenna Buchele

HYMN Jesus, Our Brother, Strong and Good (Hymn 138, verses 1 and 6)

Narrators

Celia Schrag, Ailis Shenk Cook, Adeline O'Neal, Adela Johnson, Annelise Johnson

Puppeteers

Eli Schrag (Tiger); Will Hannover (Sheep); Reese Johnson (Cow); Jenna Buchele (Pig); Erin Frank (Tarantula); Grace Heginger (Dove); Emma Johnson (Mary); Jacob Buchele (Joseph); Mariela Briseno, Adam Chelcea, Lucy Hannover, Anna Watts, Oliver Watts, Lamar Wilson (Spiders and Stars).

Love Came Down at Christmas

Video by Jars of Clay

Scripture Reading

Jenna Buchele

Prayer

Marlys O'Neal

Lord's Prayer

Adysen Pingel, Abby Buchele, Eli Heginger, Kathryn Shields, Jacob Buchele, Marlys O'Neal

Music by Ben Schrag

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

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 Love Came Down at Christmas (Hymn 165)

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

12/20 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

1/10 Jesus Heals and Teaches, Mark 2:1-22

Ames Alternative Gifts Market - Dec. 13

The Ames Alternative Gifts Market will be available in the parlor after worship on 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.

Library Work Crew - Dec. 16

On Wednesday, December 16, we will get together to process more books for the Church Library. The more people who come the faster the work goes and we get lots of new books to read in our library. Everyone is welcome to work with us. Please notify Barbara Faidley at 233-3874 or barbara@faidley.org so enough materials will be available. We will meet from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Join us for conversation, work, good books and fellowship.

Movie Night - Dec. 18

Movie night! Children and elders and everyone in between are invited to enjoy A MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL in the Fellowship Hall at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 18. Younger kids are invited to bring blankets to watch from the floor. Very light refreshments will be provided. You are welcome to bring your favorite to share.

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.

Treats for Christmas Caroling - Dec. 20

You're invited by the Member Services Team to provide "Tasty Treats" for our upcoming caroling party, Sunday, December 20th. At 4 p.m. carolers will gather at church, 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 refreshments. Sign up on SignUpGenius at <http://ow.ly/VG02z>.

Welcome Chad Schwickerath To Our Pulpit - Jan. 3

Chad grew up in suburban Ankeny, Iowa, and graduated from Iowa State University. With an interest in church politics and a deep spiritual hunger, he attended Princeton Theological Seminary for his Masters of Divinity. Chad's seminary experience transformed his worldview by challenging his preconceived notions of right, wrong, and the expected. Seminary allowed Chad to expose and explore previously unacknowledged aspects of his identity, his theology, and his understanding of humanity. After graduation, Chad worked for a housing-first agency, providing programming and crisis-management to homeless young adults in Chicago employing a lens of harm reduction and trauma-informed care. Chad is currently the Annual Fund & Alumni Relations Manager at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS), one of Ames UCC's mission partners and Pr. Eileen's alma mater. He and his partner live in Hyde Park, Chicago with their feral cat, Ira.

"Worshiping with congregations gives me the opportunities to take part in that ongoing dialogue between CTS and its supportive churches. It provides opportunity to challenge and be challenged in our work together. It is a constant reminder that the ministry of CTS impacts and is impacted far beyond the walls of our building and the streets of our city. Coming to Ames United Church of Christ is, in a sense, also a homecoming for me. It is a return to the state that raised me and a return to the town where I attended college. I look forward to worshiping with you."

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

Monday, Dec 14

12:00 p.m. AMOS Housing Group

Tuesday, December 15

3:00 p.m. Farm to Folk
7:15 p.m. Executive Board

Wednesday, December 16

8:30 a.m. Morning Bible Study
9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew
12:10 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers
1:30 p.m. Library Work Crew
2:05 p.m. Wed Afternoon Club
6:45 p.m. Choir Practice

Friday, December 18

7:00 p.m. Movie Night

Saturday, December 19

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

Sunday, December 20

9:30 a.m. Learning Center
9:30 a.m. Sunday School
10:45 a.m. Worship Service

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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