

**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 20, 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 siblings Judy Blair, Mary Mulford, John Uitermarkt, and Tom Uitermarkt (Advent wreath), Eileen Gebbie (liturgist and worship leader).

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 LOVE

One: Elizabeth was barren with no hope for a child, but then a baby filled her womb. The presence of new life filled her with hope.

Many: May the light of Christ fill us with hope.

One: Elizabeth did not know why Mary came rushing through her doors, but the leap of her unborn child filled her with the knowledge of the Lord. The knowledge of the Lord filled her with peace.

Many: May the light of Christ fill us with peace.

One: John the Baptist, while in the womb of his mother, expressed the joy of generations to come. The faith of Mary filled the unborn babe with joy.

Many: May the light of Christ fill us with joy.

One: In a moment filled with hope, in a moment filled with peace, in a moment filled with joy, Mary opens her mouth to sing, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." Mary rejoices in the God who loves the oppressed; Mary rejoices in the God who loves hungry. Mary a maiden, Mary unseen by the powerful of the world, is filled with the light and made powerful by a God bent on overturning the world with a teenage girl and newborn babe.

Many: Like the first disciple Mary, let the light of Christ fill us with love.

One: Please join me in prayer.

Many: God of Love, we thank you for bringing the light of Christ into the world.

**May the love shared by Elizabeth and Mary
serve as a beacon for our own affections.**

**May we, like Mary, create love that exalts the lowly
and makes low the proud.**

May we all bear the light that changes the world. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

One: We look for an extraordinary sign of hope for our world but God's sign is most ordinary of all:

Many: A young woman is with child.

One: We look to power for strength in our world but God points to the most vulnerable:

Many: She gives birth.

One: We look far and wide for a key to God's mystery, but God points us home:

Many: She calls this child Emmanuel: God-with-us!

One: Let us rejoice, and worship our God

Many: in our ordinary, vulnerable lives: God-with-us!

HYMN "Awake to Change" (insert)

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: Surprising God, you make your presence known in unexpected ways, and challenge our comfortable assumptions about how you work. Meet us here today and open our hearts to recognize you in our midst calling us to live into your new thing: a world where your love takes shape in justice and peace. In the name of the One who is coming, we pray:

Many: 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: In this last week before Christmas, the busyness and the anxieties of this holiday season may overwhelm us, and keep us from feeling the wonder of these days. Let us take a moment to re-order our lives in this reality: In Jesus Christ, the Love, Compassion and Justice of God is breaking into our world.

Silence

One: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth: Stir up your might, and come to save us!

**Many: Restore us, O God;
let your face shine,
and change our lives with your justice.**

One: O God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed us with the bread of tears, and given us tears to drink in full measure.

**Many: Restore us, O God;
let your face shine,
and heal our lives with your compassion.**

One: Reveal to us your Promised One, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

**Many: Restore us, O God;
let your face shine,
and delight our lives with your love.**

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.

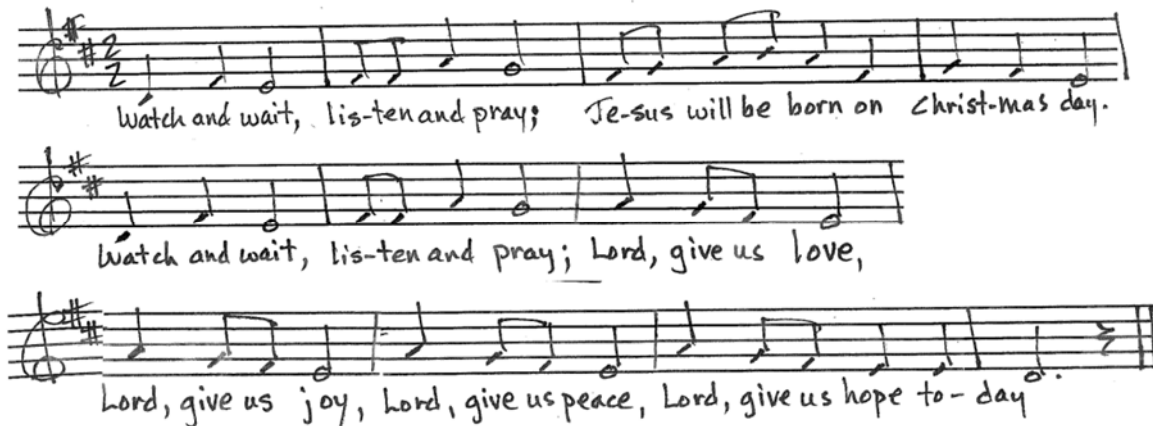
ASSURANCE OF PARDON

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

One: In Christ, the light of God's love shines in our hearts, and we are forgiven and given strength to forgive. Let us give thanks that in Jesus, Emmanuel, God is truly with us. Amen.

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.



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 love,
Lord, give us joy, Lord, give us peace, Lord, give us hope to-day.

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.

HEBREW BIBLE Psalm 146:5-10

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.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.
The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD!

SING WE NOW OF CHRISTMAS

arr. H. Helvey
Chancel choir, Liz Morse, flute

People, Look East

Sing of One who prophets told,
in the darkened days of old;
God would send—His precious Son.
Watch and wait, for He will come!

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Sing of One, the angel tells,
within a maiden's body dwells.
Lo, the day is drawing near
when our salvation will appear.

Coventry Carol

Sing now, of the humble birth
of the Lord of heaven and earth;
for within a stable drear
came the blessed Child, so dear.

Sing We Now of Christmas

Sing we now our songs of praise
to the One who crowns our days;
who brings light to all the earth.
Come and worship at His birth!

HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Come to the Table of Grace” (insert)

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION WITH OFFERING OF FOOD AND GIFTS

Our Communion table is open to all: young and old, faithful and dubious. No one will be turned away. We serve the bread and the juice through “intinction,” which means dipping the bread into the juice. Your server will offer each to you with the phrases “the Bread of Life” and “the Cup of Blessing.” If you are unable to come forward but would like to participate in the meal, simply wait for your row to be empty, then raise your hand. A server will come to you. The bread is free of gluten, soy, and dairy. If you have brought canned goods for our local food pantries, please set them at the Communion table before being served.

Invitation

One: The prophets foretold it: the desert burst into bloom. Angelic messengers delivered news: a priest lost his speech; a young woman found her voice. In this season of Advent, the scriptures revive old stories and bring new understandings.

**Many: In the face of critics and skeptics, our faith cries out, resilient,
like a baby from a manger bed.**

One: From that Bethlehem beginning, Jesus, baptized in the Jordan, spent his life serving others that all might know the compassionate attention of a loving God.

**Many: Today, Jesus serves us yet again,
as we gather at this Table he prepares for us.**

Prayer

One: Dear Jesus of Advent, you remain a sacred mystery to us. You have brought Good News for all the people and we will not be afraid, for you are here. We are hungry for your love which surpasses all our understanding; we are thirsty for your spirit that never runs dry. In this meal nourish our souls, feed our minds, quench our deepest longings and forgive our transgressions, that we may glorify you every day of our lives.

Many: Amen.

Blessing of the Feast

One: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:

Many: “Take and eat, all of you: This is my body, surrendered for you.”

One: And pouring the wine:

**Many: “Take and drink, all of you: This is the seal of a new covenant,
my poured-out life.”**

Sharing of the Meal

Prayer of Thanksgiving

**All: Holy Creator, Bread of Life, Everlasting Salvation,
a light shines in the night and the night will not overcome it.
In this meal we have been replenished and strengthened,
the light of your love rekindled within.
We will be bold to carry this light into the world.
Thank you for reviving your glow within us.
You are the power source that never gives out –
eternally renewable and eternally creative.
Thank you God; Thank you Christ; Thank you Spirit. 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).

Today, we are also taking a special offering for the United Church of Christ Christmas Fund. 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. Please place your donation to the Christmas Fund in the designated envelope in your bulletin.

What Can I Give Him?

Sing of those who from the east,
came to find the Prince of Peace.
Like them, may we also bring
gifts of love to Christ, our King.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

HYMN OF SENDING "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" (Hymn 129)

BENEDICTION

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

Special thanks to those who contributed to the choral music:

Katie Bonney, Laura Deal, Jennifer Gelwick-Leucke, Dinah Kerksieck, Lesley Lackore, Greg Lamont, Liz Morse, Laurie Olk, Terry Potter, Kristin Shields, Bill Slinger, Carol Smith, Pat Spangler, Sunny Stewart, David White, Richard White, Greg Wool, Bill Yungclas

AMES UCC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Sunday Scriptures

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

1/17 Parables in Mark, Mark 4:1-34

No bible study on Wednesday, December 30th due to the holiday.

Pick up your free Lifetouch portrait!

If you had your photo taken for our pictorial directory but did not purchase additional photos, your free Lifetouch portrait is available in the church office. Please come by to pick it up!

Christmas Eve Service - Dec. 24

Join us for a worship service of familiar hymns, Holy Communion, and candlelight at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

Food at First Christmas Lunch - Dec. 25

Food at First will be hosting a Christmas meal for all from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at First Christian Church. Please join us either through volunteering or through your presence at this community meal.

Holiday Hours

The Ames UCC church office will be closed from Monday, December 28 through Thursday, December 31 for Christmas and New Year's, as well as our usual Friday and Saturday. In case of pastoral emergency, please call 515-428-1779.

No Sunday School - Dec. 27 and Jan. 3

We will have worship but no Sunday school on Sunday, December 27th and Sunday, January 3rd.

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.

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.

Please consider attending the training. RSVP to Pr. Eileen (eileen@amesucc.org, [515-232-9323](tel:515-232-9323)) by December 24, 2015. Thank you!

Worship with The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins at FCC - Jan. 17

On Sunday, January 17, 2016, the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, will be preaching at First Christian Church (611 Clark Ave, Ames) at 10:30 a.m. As we do each July, we will be joining our friends at FCC for this worship opportunity. There will be no worship or regular Sunday activities at Ames UCC on that day, but there will be childcare and learning opportunities will be available at FCC.

Calendar for the Week

Monday, December 21

1:00 p.m. Newsletter Crew

Tuesday, December 22

Pr. Eileen's Reading Day
 12:00 p.m. Men's Fellowship
 3:00 p.m. Farm to Folk

Wednesday, December 23

8:30 a.m. Morning Bible Study
 9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew
 12:10 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers
 6:45 p.m. Choir Practice

Thursday, December 24

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

Saturday, December 26

11:20 a.m. Meals on Wheels

Sunday, December 27

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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