



**Ames United Church of Christ
Sunday, December 27, 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 Eileen Gebbie (homily), Hannah Hannover (Children's Celebration), Amanda Petefish-Schrag (liturgist), Allen Trenkle (worship leader).

IN OTHER WORDS

Rather than a traditional service of scripture and sermon, today we will hear from poets. Poets, to whom we are so indebted for much in the Bible.

GREETINGS "Up-Hill" by Christina Rossetti

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you waiting at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Passing the Peace is an ancient Christian tradition in which we show we carry no weapons, only love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Most announcements are also in your bulletin and our weekly e-newsletter. To sign up, e-mail office@amesucc.org.

CALL TO WORSHIP “The Risk of Birth” by Madeleine L’Engle

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

This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn-
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn-
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

HYMN “Joy to the World”

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.”

**Joy to the World , the Lord is come!/Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,/And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,/And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.**

**Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!/Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains/Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,/Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,/And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,/And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,/And wonders, wonders, of His love.**

INVOKING THE HOLY “When the World was Dark” by the Iona Community

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: When the world was dark
 and the city was quiet,
 you came.

Many: You crept in beside us.

One: And no one knew.
 Only the few
 who dared to believe
 that God might do something different.

Many: Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

One: Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world;
 not the friendly darkness
 as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,
 but the fearful darkness,
 in which people have stopped believing
 that war will end
 or that food will come
 or that a government will change
 or that the Church cares?

**Many: Will you come into that darkness
 and do something different
 to save your people from death and despair?**

One: Will you come into the quietness of this town,
 not the friendly quietness
 as when lovers hold hands,
 but the fearful silence when
 the phone has not rung
 the letter has not come,
 the friendly voice no longer speaks,
 the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness,
and do something different,
not to distract, but to embrace your people?

Many: **And will you come into the dark corners
and the quiet places of our lives?**

One: We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden
or want to be,
but because the fullness our lives long for
depends upon us being as open and vulnerable to you
as you were to us,
when you came,
wearing no more than diapers,
and trusting human hands
to hold their maker.

Many: **Will you come into our lives,
if we open them to you
and do something different?**

One: When the world was dark
and the city was quiet
you came.

Many: **You crept in beside us.**

One: Do the same this Christmas, Lord.
Do the same this Christmas.
Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION “A Short Testament” by Anne Porter

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: Whatever harm I may have done
In all my life in all your wide creation
If I cannot repair it

Many: **I beg you to repair it,**

One: And then there are all the wounded
The poor the deaf the lonely and the old
Whom I have roughly dismissed
As if I were not one of them.
Where I have wronged them by it
And cannot make amends
I ask you

Many: **To comfort them to overflowing,**

One: And where there are lives I may have withered around me,
Or lives of strangers far or near
That I’ve destroyed in blind complicity,
And if I cannot find them
Or have no way to serve them,

Many: **Remember them. I beg you to remember them**

One: When winter is over
And all your unimaginable promises
Burst into song on death’s bare branches.

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 “In Blackwater Woods” by Mary Oliver

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

Look, the trees
 are turning
 their own bodies
 into pillars

 of light,
 are giving off the rich
 fragrance of cinnamon
 and fulfillment,

 the long tapers
 of cattails
 are bursting and floating away over
 the blue shoulders

 of the ponds,
 and every pond,
 no matter what its
 name is, is

 nameless now.
 Every year
 everything
 I have ever learned

 in my lifetime
 leads back to this: the fires
 and the black river of loss
 whose other side

 is salvation,
 whose meaning
 none of us will ever know.
 To live in this world

 you must be able
 to do three things:
 to love what is mortal;
 to hold it

 against your bones knowing
 your own life depends on it;
 and, when the time comes to let it go,
 to let it go.

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 and as they return to their seats.



GOSPEL Mark 1:1-20 (New Revised Standard Version)

Gospel means “good news,” making the full title of this book of the Bible “The Good News of Jesus Christ according to Mark.”

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
 who will prepare your way;
 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
 ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
 make his paths straight.’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

HOMILY

HYMN OF REFLECTION "Angels We Have Heard On High"

**Angels we have heard on high / Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply / Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! / Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee? / Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be / Which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! / Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**Come to Bethlehem and see / Him Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, / Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! / Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**See Him in a manger laid, / Whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, / While our hearts in love we raise.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! / Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH "Walking to Jerusalem" by Philip Terman

Please share your prayer needs as you are so moved.

Pedometer attached to her belt, your mother, spry and strong
at eighty, joins the other Methodist Church members
in calculating the 5,915 miles, no matter the weather, to add up
all the way from Linesville, Pennsylvania to Jerusalem.
They need not worry about miracles or pausing
at the signs of the cross. They need not stop for security
to check their purses for weapons. They need no visa
nor baggage, no money to exchange for shekels, no guide-
book, no guide. They need no ancient tongue or prophecies.
They are, simply, day by day, walking, mile after mile:
the sink to the table, uptown to the post office, down
the block to visit the sick neighbor. Sundays to and from church.
And when they walk far enough, adding up their pedometers
together, they will arrive in Jerusalem. And keep walking.

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 Emily Mullaney, violinist

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

“The Work of Christmas,” Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music from the heart.

HYMN OF SENDING

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

**While shepherds kept their watching / Over silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens, / There shone a holy light:
Go, Tell It On The Mountain, / Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, Tell It On The Mountain / That Jesus Christ is born.**

**The shepherds feared and trembled / When lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus / That hailed our Savior's birth:
Go, Tell It On The Mountain, / Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, Tell It On The Mountain / That Jesus Christ is born.**

**Down in a lowly manger / Our humble Christ was born
And God send us salvation, / That blessed Christmas morn:
Go, Tell It On The Mountain, / Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, Tell It On The Mountain / That Jesus Christ is born.**

**When I am a seeker, / I seek both night and day;
I seek the Lord to help me, / And He shows me the way:
Go, Tell It On The Mountain, / Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, Tell It On The Mountain / That Jesus Christ is born.**

BENEDICTION

From the Latin of “well” and “to speak,” this is one final good word to send us off. Please join us next door in the parlor for coffee, tea, treats, and community.

God's Story
Our Story

December 27, 2015

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your daily devotions.

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

Voice of heaven, speak in us this day. Stir our hearts with your Word. Let us find both our happiness and our power in you. Amen.

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

I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Mark 1:8

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Mark's gospel begins with a fiery preacher and a challenging message. No silent night here, no gift-bearing visitors. John the Baptist awaits his cousin, Jesus, by a stream in the wilderness. Temptations await Jesus on the other side. Soon, by the lakeshore, the divine call will be irresistible.

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

Sunday, Mark 1:1-20, Beginning of Good News

Monday, Psalm 91:9-12

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

Wednesday, Isaiah 40:1-11, Comfort, Comfort

Thursday, Isaiah 44:1-8, God's Blessing on Israel

Friday, Joel 2:28-29, God's Spirit Poured Out

Saturday, Isaiah 42:1-9, The Servant, a Light to the Nations

How do these Hebrew Bible readings tie into the gospel reading for Sunday?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with “Highs” and “Lows.”

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus' ministry began with his baptism? What does your baptism mean to you?

How do you make it known that you are a disciple of Jesus? What could you do to make Christ known through the way you live your life?

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week. Make a list of 5 ways your life could be a proclamation of Jesus' presence in your life. Focus on doing more of one of those throughout the week.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill your life with the good news of eternal life. Amen.

AMES UCC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Sunday Scriptures

- 1/3 Beginning of Good News, Mark 1:21-45
- 1/10 Jesus Heals and Teaches, Mark 2:1-22
- 1/17 Worship at First Christian Church (611 Clark Ave)
- 1/24 Jairus' Daughter Healed, Mark 6:1-29

Thank You, Sunny!

Sunny Stewart, our organist/pianist/keyboardist/guitarist/drummer, has served God through Ames UCC in one capacity or another since 1991 (with a couple of breaks between then and now). Her anniversary is Sunday, January 3. Please take a moment to thank her for the ways she helps you in your own service to the divine.

Closed Between Holidays

Our church office will be closed Monday, December 28 through Thursday, December 31 (as well as the usual Friday and Saturday). For pastoral emergencies, please call 515-428-1779.

Guest Preacher Chad Schwickerath on January 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.



"Worshipping with congregations gives me the opportunities to take part in that on-going 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 worshipping with you."



Morning Worship at First Christian Church on Sunday, January 17 at 10:30 a.m.

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.

This is a unique opportunity for us to hear the "Pope of the DOC" share God's good news, so **we will worship at FCC**. There will be no worship or regular Sunday activities at Ames UCC on that day, but there will be childcare and learning opportunities at FCC.

Later that afternoon, at 2 p.m., FCC is also hosting (along with the Unity church and our own) a community interfaith celebration of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Please see the details on that service on the next page.

Theologian-In-Residence Weekend January 30-31st

The topic for the 32nd Theologian-In-Residence weekend is "God and Government: Are Religious Liberties Crumbling?" with The 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 30th

- 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 31st

- 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 Café. **Registration deadline for box lunch: January 11, 2016**

UNITE HEARTS IN LOVE OVERCOME VIOLENCE

2016 Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith Service

**Sunday, January 17th
2:00 p.m.**

Featuring

- REV. DR. SHARON WATKINS,
GENERAL MINISTER &
PRESIDENT, CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)
- JACOB CARMI, RECENT
RECIPIENT OF THE DREAM SEED
SCHOLARSHIP
- SPECIAL OFFERING FOR THE
DREAM SEED SCHOLARSHIP

Hosted by:
First Christian Church
611 Clark Ave.
Ames, IA

A Reception Will Follow.
All Are Invited.
All Are Welcome

Calendar for the Week

Monday, December 28

Church office closed for holidays

Tuesday, December 29

Church office closed for holidays

3:00 p.m. Farm to Folk

Wednesday, December 30

Church office closed for holidays

9:30 a.m. AM Work Crew

12:10 p.m. Peace Bell Ringers

Thursday, December 31

Church office closed for holidays

Saturday, January 2

11:20 a.m. Meals on Wheels

Sunday, January 3

9:30 a.m. God Talk (Miracles)

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:45 a.m. Worship Service
with Chad Schwickerath

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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