

Think how exciting it would be to discover a book
that told all about the history of your family,
your Ames United Church of Christ family.
This book is that book.



*Our first
150 years*

Ames United Church of Christ
- *Congregational*

no matter who you are,
or where you are on life's journey



you are welcome here

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photographs



INTRODUCTION:

A message from the 150th Anniversary Celebration Team

What is today the Ames United Church of Christ-Congregational, located at Sixth and Kellogg in Ames, Iowa, began one hundred and fifty years ago in much more modest surroundings. The first worship services were held in the railroad depot of the infant town. A buffalo hide was placed over a trunk for a pulpit and planks of wood over nail kegs were their pews. In early November 1865, eight individuals, two Baptists, three Presbyterians, and three Congregational members organized a “union” church. So began the First Congregational Church of Ames, our church family.

During its 150 years, the first congregation in Ames has both mirrored the cultures – social, political, economic, and religious – in which it is embedded and engaged in pioneering spiritual practices and innovative social actions. The first purpose of this historical narrative is to chronicle what the Ames UCC, as it is now called, accomplished in those years. The second purpose is to reflect upon what was begun and continues as well as what was attempted and discontinued. Why do this? We are disciples of a Christian tradition that asks us to recall “the great cloud of witnesses” that has gone before us (Hebrews 12:1). From that legacy, generations of members have built a new vision to witness to their current and future worlds. In those 150 years, that first intimate church family has been replaced by many families. An estimated 4,500 to 5,000 individuals have joined the congregation. Some have been present for a short time then left for new communities while others have been in the church for generations.

The narrative will be told in periods of thirty years: 1865-1894, 1895-1924, 1925-1954, 1955-1984, and 1985-present. Each thirty-year block of time will begin with an overview of relevant social and cultural events followed by a recounting of significant theological, religious, and denominational movements that had an impact upon the congregation. Important developments and statistics from the City of Ames and the higher education institution that became today’s Iowa State University are included. Regarding the congregation, data, details and legends of the church’s membership, ministers and staff, buildings and budgets, programs and organizations, and social justice activities will be shared.

This narrative is just one of several ways that the Ames UCC is observing its sesquicentennial. Jan Bauer, a member of the congregation, has written several plays and programs. “The Bell at Sixth and Kellogg,” was created for inclusion in a series of programs for the 150th anniversary of the City of Ames in 2014. In June, 2015, another program was offered at the Church when a cast of characters modeled wedding gowns from different eras. Some of the women participating in this program wore their own wedding gowns. From time to time Laurie Olk and others have prepared historical displays portraying the lives of significant individuals from the congregation as well as milestone events, such as confirmations and baptisms.

A word of clarification about the use of “our.” The title page declares “Our First 150 Years,” then adds the official present name – Ames United Church of Christ – Congregational. The emphasis of the text is clearly on the congregation’s history inside the walls of the church as well as the impact it has had outside the walls on the local, regional, and wider worlds. The use of “our” should not be construed to be exclusive to reflect a “chosen few” or “faithful remnant.” Just as the Pulitzer



prize-winning play of 1938, *Our Town*, used Grovers Corners, New Hampshire to depict how humans universally respond to life and death situations, so this narrative of a single congregation's trials and triumphs conveys the message that we imperfect saints journey not "but for the grace of God," but "by the grace of God."

A number of current members of the congregation should be acknowledged for their contributions to this narrative. They provided written records or recollections as well as checked the manuscripts for accuracy. Previous histories of the congregation were extremely helpful. At milestone anniversaries – 50, 75, 100, and 125 years – special services and programs have told the story of the congregation's struggles and successes. Authors of those accounts, such as Farwell Brown, make this writing easier. Acknowledgement pages are found elsewhere. Why do this? As Johann Sebastian Bach often signed his musical works, we do it "to the glory of God."

The members of the 150th Anniversary Celebration Committee,

Jan Bauer and Lauie Olk, co-chairs

Ellen Barnhart

Cornelia Flora

Jan Breitman

Charles Kniker

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Note regarding copying and distributing of material in this publication:

- We recognize and acknowledge with deep appreciation that previously published materials in the congregation's history are quoted extensively in this narrative. That includes early Manuals, church records, and recollection accounts at milestone events, such as the 100th anniversary and 125th anniversary. We are indebted to the Ames Historical Society for use of its files.
- For the convenience of members and friends, chapters of this written narrative will also be placed temporarily on the congregation's website: www.amesucc.org. If and when copies of this publication are printed, the website "copy" may be taken down.
- In this publication, Charles R. Kniker has included descriptions and analysis of various historical periods. He retains the right to publish them in a future book and asks that those sections not be copied or distributed.

