



# AMES UCC COURIER

## SPRING 2017

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Peace Bell Ringers on Wednesdays at 12:00 p.m.*  
Ames UCC is a Just Peace Church. "Just peace" is the interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. Since Lent of 1986, Ames UCC's church bell has been rung every Wednesday at noon by congregants who pray together and talk about troubled places in the world. Join us in the bell tower any Wednesday.

### *Come to Learning Center*

Join the conversation on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. The coffee and hot water are always on.

- January 29 Chair Exercises for the New Year led by Nanette Heginger
- February 5 God Talk: "Chosen? The Elect?" with Pastor Eileen
- February 12 Member Services Team wants your Ideas for Social Activities
- February 19 Panel Discussion on Raising Kids
- February 26 Get Ready for Theologian in Residence – Charles Kniker
- March 5 Rev. Harry T. Cook, Theologian in Residence
- March 12 God Talk: "Love" with Pastor Eileen
- March 19 Populist Anger - Paul Lasley
- March 26 Journeys of Faith
- April 2 God Talk: "Do Biblical Predictions Matter?" with Pr. Eileen
- April 9 Palm Sunday intergenerational program
- April 16 Easter: no program

### *Women's Fellowship by Barbara Faidley*

The women of the church continue to gather on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month. Usually one meeting is a planned meeting and one meeting is a Joys and Concerns meeting when we get to know each other better. We normally meet from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. and bring our lunches. Lori Peake will be our hostess for our February planned meeting.



Scenes from Wednesday Afternoon Club  
and Intergenerational Game Night

In March, there is a change for meeting time. Pr. Eileen will be doing a short service at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesdays during Lent. We will be joining her at the service in the sanctuary and coming to Fellowship Hall to eat our lunch and visit with each other. We will have only one meeting of Women's Fellowship in April as the second Wednesday falls during Holy Week. Our other meeting in April will be about being a Just Peace Church. Look for further announcements in the e-blast announcements or in the Sunday bulletin.

### *Book Club by Lynette Spicer*

The UCC Book Club welcomes all readers and even those who just want to hear the discussion. The group meets in the church library on the third Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m.

**February 15 – *Long Live Salvation by Works: A Humanist Manifesto* by Harry T. Cook.** (2012 nonfiction, 200 pages) Discussion leaders: book club planning members

Harry T. Cook is a retired Episcopal priest, a scholar of ancient religious texts and the ideas that have emerged from them. He will be the Theologian in Residence at Ames UCC on March 3-5.

**March 15 -- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander** (2012 nonfiction, 336 pages) Discussion leader: Nancy Marks

With dazzling candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness.

**April 19 – *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie** (1934 fiction, 336 pages) Discussion leader: Paul Clark

The Orient Express, snowed up in Yugoslavia, provides the ideal 'closed' set-up for a classic-style exercise in detection, as well as an excuse for an international cast-list.

### *AMOS Core Team Training – 2/4*

Learn the art of organizing, deepening relationships, engaging in radical conversation, and acting together to live out our public mission to be the body of Christ in the world! This training will be from 10a to 2p (with lunch) on Saturday, February 4 with AMOS lead organizer Liz Hall. Past successes from this type of training include the creation of Project Iowa, Primary Health Care, and an ongoing effort to increase funding for affordable housing in Story County. Even more importantly, institutions like ours that learn such skills become more robust, efficient, relational, and sustainable. RSVP to Pr. Eileen, including your childcare needs, by 2/1: eileen@amesucc.org, 515-232-9323.

### *Intergenerational Game Nights*

Faith formation and human development require the sharing of different perspectives. In a culture that all too often sequesters human beings based on demographics of age, intentionally intergenerational gatherings are one way that we push back on such isolation and move into beloved community. And we can have a lot of fun doing it! Please join the Pilcher family for games and fun on the second Friday of the upcoming months: February 10 and March 10. We will meet in the Youth Room and Fellowship Hall from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Intergenerational Game Night will not be held Friday, April 14. That night, a Good Friday service will be held at Ames UCC.

### *One Great Hour of Sharing – 3/26*

Through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, the United Church of Christ joins with six other Christian denominations to provide assistance to those in crisis around the world. In this effort, One Great Hour of Sharing raises over \$10 million annually. Funds from the UCC portion of this offering support international development, disaster relief and response, health care, education, sustainable agricultural development, and refugee support. Ames UCC will collect for this offering on Sunday, March 26, along with other churches around the world.

# THE SEASON OF LENT

## *Manna and Mercy Coloring Book (RSVP by 2/15)*

If you are unfamiliar with the arc of our Bible's story, or would like a refresher, join me for a Lenten study of Genesis through Revelation using Daniel Erlander's "Manna and Mercy" adult coloring book. We will gather from 7–8:30 p.m. on Monday March 6, 13, 20, 27 and April 3.

Please RSVP to me by Wednesday, February 15 so that I may order books. There will be a \$10 charge, with a few copies available for those for whom this is a hardship. Please also let me know if you will need childcare. It is just fine if you can't make every session, but I do want to have sufficient supplies and be able to tell you the schedule of coloring. –Pr. Eileen

## *Godly Play During Lent*

The Godly Play story "The Faces of Easter" is a beautiful 6 part story that chronicles the life of Jesus (from birth to death) to be used with children during Lent. We feel like it is such a special story and want every child to have an opportunity to hear it. Throughout Lent we will be telling the stories during the Sunday School hour (beginning at 9:15 a.m.) and during worship (following the Children's Celebration). We would love to have any child that wants to join us come for one or both of the story opportunities each week! Please note that we will NOT have Sunday School on March 12 because of Spring Break, but we WILL have Godly Play during worship.

## *Ash Wednesday Services – 3/1*

12 p.m. at Ames UCC with imposition of ashes  
7 p.m. with First United Methodist and First Christian at First Christian Church (6<sup>th</sup> and Clark) with imposition of ashes

## *Midday, Midweek Lenten Worship & Lunch*

Please join me and Pr. Hannah for a special Lenten service each Wednesday during the season. Our Peace Bell ringers will start with their bell ringing, prayer, and song in the bell tower at noon.

Immediately after (about 12:10 p.m.) we will sing, pray, and listen for God in the sanctuary proper. We will adjourn by 12:30 p.m. If you are able, please bring your lunch and stay to eat it together after in the Fellowship Hall. The dates are March 1 (Ash Wednesday), 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5. –Pr. Eileen

## *Join Our Easter Choir During Lent*

Many of us have too much to do and cannot take on one more long term commitment. To that end, your worship staff members and lay team are developing one-time and limited term opportunities for giving of our time and talents in worship. On Easter Sunday, April 16, we will have a special musical presentation by an "Easter Choir": regular choristers plus any additional worshippers who would like to join in for a spell. Rehearsals will be in the sanctuary on Wednesday, March 8, 15, and 22 and April 5 and 12 from 6:45–8 p.m. Contact Lesley Lackore (llackore@gmail.com, 515-231-0958) for more information or just show up. Childcare will be available throughout. –Pr. Eileen

## *Introduction to Lent – 3/8*

What is Lent? Why is Lent? What has it meant in the past and what might it mean for us now? On Wednesday, March 8 from 6:45 – 8 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall (right after the soup supper) come learn and come teach. God is still speaking to all of us! Childcare will be available.

## *Crisis Theologies – 3/15*

Easter is the ultimate crisis in our faith – and often to our faith. On Wednesday, March 15 from 6:45 – 8 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall (right after the soup supper), we will talk about all manner of different theologies of crisis and crisis theologies. Childcare will be available.

## *Why Bother Praying? And How. – 3/22*

Prayer is one of the core practices of faith and religion, but it can also be one of the most confusing as well as the most difficult to incorporate into daily life. On Wednesday, March 22 from 6:45 – 8 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall (right after the soup supper), we will explore different theologies and styles of prayer. Childcare will be available.

## *Taizé Service – 3/29*

Taizé is a religious community in France that has developed a beautiful, meditative style of worship. At 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29 (after our soup supper), we will go to the sanctuary for a service of song, prayer, and silence in the style of Taizé.

## *Stations of the Cross – 4/5*

The “stations of the cross” are the moments and incidents that the Bible records Jesus going through prior to his execution. On Wednesday, April 5 from 6:45 – 8 p.m. (right after the soup supper), we will walk those stations (throughout our building) and take time to discuss our responses. Childcare will be available.

# TEAM TALK

## *Worship and Music (WAM) by Barbara Faidley*

As new coordinators, vice coordinators and core teams take over, many new skills and procedures must be learned. Both Dan Coffey and I are new to Worship and Music and in the process of learning a lot.

*Where are the light switches for the sanctuary located?*

*What time should the ushers arrive in the sanctuary?*

*How do you check the batteries of our assisted listening devices?*

*What is the AED and where is it during our service?*

All these and many more fascinating questions were answered during the transition meeting held with old and new coordinators. I am pleased to be serving in the role as coordinator for the Worship and Music Team. When the worship service goes well on Sunday morning, it means that members of the Worship and Music Committee has worked hard behind the scenes to make it so.

## **Lay-Led Ministry**

Part of the worship service can belong to all of us. We always need help in the form of greeters and ushers. Anyone can do this and it is one way you can participate in the life of the church. You can find links to sign up

at [amesucc.org/sign-up](http://amesucc.org/sign-up) and in the sidebar of your weekly e-mail. You can also sign up by contacting Katie in the church office or see me (Barbara Faidley). If someone comes up to you to ask you to serve, please think about it and say YES. If you have not done it before, the deacon of the day will help you out and show you what to do. We welcome everyone!

## **Changes in the Order of Service**

During the fall, the Worship and Music team held Listening Sessions with a cross-section of members of the congregation. From those sessions, it was suggested that the Passing of the Peace in our worship service be at a different time in the service. You may have noticed that it has been changed. We will evaluate this change after Pentecost. If you have any opinions about it, please let one of the deacons know or Dan Coffey or myself. The other change is that there will continue to be no spoken announcements during the service. We will put all announcements about upcoming events in the Sunday bulletin and in the e-blast. If you would like to have a calendar of upcoming events, Katie, our office administrator, will print one for you.

## *Christian Education*

### **Palm Sunday Celebration – 4/9**

Everyone is invited to join us for our annual Palm Sunday Celebration! The fun begins at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall for a time of Lent and Easter crafts, fellowship, and a light breakfast! There will be something for ALL ages! Following the celebration, children are invited to process into worship with palm fronds! It is a great way to gather and begin Holy Week together.

### **Easter Egg Hunt – 4/16**

Join us at 9:45 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall for an Easter Egg Hunt before worship! ALL children are invited! Please bring your own basket or bag to keep all your goodies! Youth are encouraged to meet Hannah at 9:15 a.m. to help hide all the eggs! We will be taking donations of individually wrapped candy, small toys, and stickers to fill the eggs during Lent.

## *Social Justice and Outreach 2017 Focus Areas*

Are you interested in getting involved with the Social Justice and Outreach (SoJO) Team in 2017? Get involved in one of our focus areas for this year by contacting a team member below.

### **Mental Health**

We will build upon the work done by AMOS.  
Contact Linda Hanson (Linda.Hanson2011@gmail.com)

### **Sanctuary Congregation**

SOJO will explore this issue. Is the congregation interested and willing to commit? Neal Flora will prepare a white paper to present what it entails.  
Contact: Neal Flora (cflora@iastate.edu).

### **Refugee Resettlement**

We have developed tremendous momentum in the past 6 months and want to continue leading this interfaith effort. Several Ames UCC members are engaged.  
Contact: Diane Birt (dbirt.ames@gmail.com)

### **Human Trafficking**

Ames UCC is financially supporting the Iowa Network against Human Trafficking and some members of our church are doing volunteer work. We want to build upon our work.  
Contact: George Belitsos (gbelitsos55@gmail.com)

### **A-Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS)**

Jan Flora will continue leadership and liaison with the Ames AMOS Core team. SOJO has been the Ames UCC connection to AMOS in recent years but we look forward to working with an active Ames UCC Core team.  
Contact: Jan Flora (floraj@iastate.edu)

### **Green Team**

Amanda and Ben Petefish-Schrag will lead in the reactivation of this important team but they need our help.  
Contact: Amanda and Ben Petefish-Schrag (petefish\_schrag@yahoo.com)

## *Financial Stewardship by Janet Binder*

Ames United Church of Christ is nothing if not generous! On behalf of the Financial Stewardship Team, I extend a great big thank you to all who give their talents and treasures so freely to the church. Such generosity is a blessing to our congregation, one that will continue to make blessings happen throughout the year to come. Did you know...

- In 2017, 9 percent of our total budget will help fund local charitable programs such as Access, Emergency Residence Project, and Food at First; regional programs like Pilgrim Heights and MICA; and national programs that support our seminaries and Our Church's Wider Mission.
- On the third Sunday of each month, when we have Holy Communion, our loose offering is deposited to the Communion Fund, which supports Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance (75%) and our in-house Pastoral Emergency Fund (25%).
- In addition to your pledges and loose offerings, there are many other giving opportunities throughout the year:

**Funding Future Leadership, January 15, 2017**, a new Iowa UCC Conference special offering. This offering is going to create scholarship aid that will help Iowa members-in-discernment as they continue in their education to become ministers. *2017 total giving: \$765*

**Souper Bowl of Caring, February 5, 2017**, led by the Youth Group. "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat." *2016 total giving: \$400*

**One Great Hour of Sharing, March 26, 2017**, received on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic disaster response, administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources. *2016 total giving: \$1,539*

**Easter Flowers, April 16, 2017**, place your order in the weeks before Easter. Remember or honor your loved ones and help

decorate the sanctuary for Easter. After Easter, flowers may be given to our members and friends who are not able to attend services in person. *Number of bouquets given in 2016: 22*

**Strengthen the Church, June 4, 2017**, received on Pentecost Sunday. Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, youth and young adult ministries within conferences and administered by Local Church Ministries. *2016 total giving: \$780*

**Attic to Basement Sale, late summer 2017**. Donate your gently used goods as well as your time for this annual fundraiser. The proceeds are designated to a charity and in-house ministry each year. *2016 total proceeds: \$4,014.30*

**Neighbors in Need, October 1, 2017**, received on the first Sunday in October as part of World Communion Sunday. One-third of this offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) and two-thirds is administered by Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. *2016 total giving: \$835*

**Holiday Hoopla and Cookie Sale, late fall, 2017**. Holiday décor and cookies may be donated to this follow-up to the Attic to Basement Sale. *2016 total proceeds: \$1,445*

**Christmas Poinsettias, December 24, 2017**, place your order in the weeks before Christmas Eve. Remember or honor your loved ones and help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. After Christmas, poinsettias may be given to our members and friends who are not able to attend services in person. *Number of plants given in 2016: 25*

**The Christmas Fund, December 24, 2017**, a ministry of the Pension Boards received on the Sunday before Christmas. Provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. *2016 total giving: \$1,156*

**Cans at Communion, third Sunday each month throughout the year.**

Each month as we satisfy our hunger for the Spirit through Holy Communion, we remember our neighbors who need help satisfying the hunger of their bodies. Please bring canned and dry goods to the communion table for delivery to the Food at First Pantry program.

**Food at First, third Saturday each month throughout the year.** We remember our brothers and sisters in need by overseeing the Food at First free meal program at First Christian Church one Saturday each month. We prepare, serve, clean-up and share a delicious meal using food that otherwise would have been thrown away by local grocery stores and food services. You won't regret volunteering on one of our Saturdays.

Finally, as we begin a new year, I would like to provide you an update on the church's financial position. While at the time of this writing the books aren't officially closed on 2016, these summary numbers are close to what the final numbers will be:

Balance Sheet	
Assets	822,000
Liabilities	5,000
Equity (Fund balances)	817,000

Our assets consist of cash and investments including received but as yet unspent 150<sup>th</sup> Capital Campaign donations.

Statement of Income and Expenses	
	Operating Budget
Income	\$305,000
Expenses	303,000
Difference	\$2,000

Our operating budget is closely monitored and controlled to keep our day-to-day spending within the budgeted limits established by the congregation.

*33rd Theologian in Residence Weekend*

How comfortable are you with your religious beliefs? Do you have any trouble accepting the language of historic creeds and traditional hymns? How much do you really know about the historical Jesus? Are your moral actions consistent with your beliefs?

Harry T. Cook, biblical scholar, a now retired Episcopal priest and former religion columnist for a major newspaper and popular speaker at seminars, will provide three stimulating sessions on Saturday, March 4. The sessions this year will have added time for questions.

Saturday, March 4

9:00 to 10:15 a.m. Origins of the Gods: Stuff We Should Know  
 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. Is the Jesus of the New Testament a Composite Character?  
 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Salvation by Works: A Humanist Manifesto

Sunday, March 5

9:00 a.m. "Does Evangelical Fundamentalism Require Clergy to Be Scholars?"  
 Sermon during "Reason's Endless Struggle with Dogma"  
 10:30 a.m. worship

**Who attended last year's TIR weekend?** Over 150 individuals attended. A number of attendees were from other Ames area faith communities. Also present were persons from 18 other Iowa cities and one person from another state. **Come!** Attend one or more sessions! **Invite** your friends and neighbors. This event is open to the public.

**A box lunch (regular or vegetarian) is available.** But if you desire a box lunch you must sign up! The TIR Committee urges you to register online at [amesucc.org/tir](http://amesucc.org/tir) by February 28 at a cost of \$11. You may also register for the box lunch through the church office (232-9323). A suggested donation of \$30.00 to support the program can be paid with your lunch, or given during the event in donation boxes.

**Volunteers are needed. Take a number to help out.**

Last year 40 different members of the congregation were involved in this signature event. If you are willing to serve in one of the following ways, please call the church office (232-0323) or inform one of the TIR Committee members (Nancy Marks, Ami Frank, Eric Abbot, Jennifer Gelwick-Luecke, Sharron Slinger, Allen Trenkle, Charles Kniker): A sign-up sheet is available on the TIR Bulletin Board for your convenience.

1. Distribute brochures and flyers to promote program (mid-late Feb.)
2. Set up Fellowship Hall for box luncheon (Friday, March 3)
3. Serve coffee prior to program beginning (March 4)
4. Bake cookies for the mid-morning break (March 3 or early March 4)
5. Serve at the registration table (March 4)
6. Serve at the mid-morning break table (March 4)
7. Usher for one of the three Saturday sessions (March 4)
8. Assist to set up audio system for one of the sessions (March 4)
9. Help serving box luncheon (March 4)
10. Assist in cleaning up Fellowship Hall after box luncheon (March 4)
11. Count monies from registration and donation contributions (Mar. 4)
12. Set up Fellowship Hall for Sunday morning Adult Forum (March 4)
13. Arrange interviews for Harry T. Cook with local radio stations (late Feb.)
14. Distribute posters to local churches, businesses, public buildings (late Feb.)

Have questions? Feel free to contact Charles Kniker, TIR Committee Coordinator, at 515-296-5036 (home) or 515-321-1439 (cell).

## *AMOS 2016 Year in Review*

Together, we have:

Celebrated AMOS's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Delegates Assembly and call to action! We were joined by Mr. Ernesto Cortes, Jr., national co-director of the Industrial Areas Foundation; Bishop Emeritus Phillip Hougren of the ELCA Southeastern Iowa Synod; founding Lead Organizer Tom Holler and IAF Supervising Organizer Paul Turner; and more than 250 leaders and clergy from AMOS institutions.

Raised over \$22,000 in hard money through our AMOS 20/20 campaign to raise 1,000 donations of \$20 or more in honor of AMOS's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Trained over 250 leaders in broad-based organizing.

Welcomed 4 new member institutions.

Moved forward our issue agenda to create a community where all can succeed by:

- Establishing a Housing Trust Fund in Story County, IA.
- Increasing summer school time by 120 hours at Moulton School in Des Moines.
- Getting public recognition for the success of AMOS's restorative justice diversion project with the Des Moines Police Department.
- Winning unanimous City Council approval to set aside 65,000 square feet of land for a world-class skate park, creating more recreational space for youth in Des Moines.

Securing commitments from candidates for state house districts 37 and 38 (Ankeny, IA) to participate in a bipartisan mental health dialogue, support restoring local control of mental health funding, and work with AMOS and address the mental health workforce shortage by funding loan repayment for mental health providers.

## CHURCH CHAT

*Join the Ames UCC Fellowship Hall on Facebook*

Ames UCC has a Facebook group for discussion and sharing in community with each other. To join, add Pr. Eileen as a Facebook friend and she will invite you.

*Pastoral Letter by Pr. Eileen*

A few months ago a friend of mine, who is not Christian, asked me why I thought Christmas became so much more popular than Easter. "Because Easter is weird," I replied.

Christmas is such a lovely story: a mom who fiercely loves her baby, regardless of social niceties, a man who does the right thing by that mom, a thoughtless government, a whole family of underdogs, and then love abundant and radiant and generous from the heavens and some good people of the Earth. Again, lovely!

But Easter describes one best friend sending another to his death (out of fear? selfishness?) and then a mom watching that betrayed man, a man who just wanted people not to fall apart from leprosy or poverty, slowly bleed, hunger, and thirst to death. What is there to celebrate?

Our scriptures make the claim that the joy came in the morning. Somehow three days later (though how Sunday morning is three days after Friday midday is another issue) the dead man walks and talks and teaches (though we don't get all of those details) before floating off into the sky with a promise to return some day—in judgement. Like Christmas, we've attached some more ancient religious traditions and symbols to Easter, like the eggs and the bunnies, but there's no way resurrection is going to get a season of shopping and Muzak carols.

This is why I hope that you will participate as fully as possible in this year's Lenten offerings.

In Advent we spend four weeks preparing for Christmas and Easter both. In Lent, we have over five weeks of preparation for both Holy Week and Easter. At Ames UCC, that preparation will include an additional Bible study opportunity, classes on crisis theologies and prayer, a weekly service at noon on Wednesdays, and on Wednesday nights our annual soup supper potlucks.

Easter is so weird that we need to slow down, listen, and be together in order to be ready to hear what God might still be saying through its murder and its mystery.

*Priesthood of All Believers (and Doubters) by Pr. Eileen*

Nearly two years ago when I was negotiating the call—from God and from you—to be your senior minister, I spent a fair amount of time looking to scripture and listening to the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we might be ministers together. Although the church has relegated the notion of a call from God to ordained ministers, Jesus' life and efforts with the disciples demonstrate the opposite: we are all called to share the good news. As a result, I requested that my "call agreement" include the stipulation that twelve times per year I would step away from the pulpit.

I did not make use of this option during my first year here, then one day last spring Michael Johnson asked if he could preach before he moved away from Ames. He did and it was beautiful. So I developed a guidance document and process for sermon preparation, looked for dates in our

schedule, and began to approach people to see who might be willing to do the same. In addition to Michael, I can now give thanks to Amy Erica Smith, Genya Coffey, Allison Anderson, and Jean Watts for interpreting our scripture and what it has meant in each of their lives.

On our church's private Facebook group, Allison recently described the experience as "amazing": "Our congregation is filled with people who are warm and loving. They are not looking for flaws and places you've messed up. I was scared, but so glad I stepped out of my comfort zone and did it." I know just what she means. For me, sermon preparation demands integrity, humility, and a pace that I dare not rush. It is always hard and each time I walk up those chancel steps, I have to "let go and let God," as the saying goes. But the outcome—again, for me—has been a closeness to God that I never could have imagined before.

As I close in on the end of my second year, I now have congregants asking for the opportunity to preach. It will take all of us, and all of our talents, and all of the risk-taking Jesus embodied for earth to be heavenly. That includes sharing the good news but also making coffee and sorting rummage items and being a greeter and offering prayers.

Our readiness to do all of those things and so much more tells me we are a place where not only is the Holy Spirit at work, but we are willing and even eager to work with the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Ames UCC, for taking your call to the priesthood of believers (and doubters) so seriously.

### *Healing After Loss: Book Review by Christa Andersen*

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Church Library has purchased books on grief mentioned by our speakers at the Listening Center grief panel held during the month of November. They can be found under Life Crisis: Grieving. The following is a review of one of those books.

#### *Healing After Loss - Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief*

by Martha Whitmore Hickman

Some say that after the death of a loved one, grief is the hardest work you'll ever do. There are no shortcuts on this journey through grief, but his book can be a comforting resource on the journey. The author herself had a child die.

Each day offers a quote, a reflection and something to think about or a specific action to take. The meditations do not need to be read in any particular order. They can be as simple as allowing the reader to take a time out for themselves to be cared for, rather than being the caregiver.

While there are no "right" or "wrong" ways to grieve, this book can offer the reader new ways to look at grief.

I was given this book by a friend whose 50 ish husband passed away in his sleep. Since then I have given away many copies to friends and family who suffered the death of a loved one.

Check the book out from the church library to see if it's helpful, but most people will want their own personal copy.

### *Children's Book Review by Barbara Faidley*

Instead of one book to review, I would like to bring to your attention a series of books that were just purchased for the library. This a set of picture books about God. The titles are: "Does God Ever Sleep?", "Does God Hear My Prayer?", "Where Does God Live?", "Does God Forgive Me?", "How Does God Listen?" and "Am I Making God Smile?"

These beautiful books help children and parents embark, TOGETHER, on an imaginative journey in search of God. The bright photographs inspire children to connect the story to their own lives. These books are published by Skylight Paths Publishing. They are considered multicultural, nondenominational and nonsectarian. They are endorsed by Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Buddhist religious leaders. Take advantage of the opportunity you have to read these books. If you have children check them out to take home and begin a discussion with your children. If you have no children, you may enjoy taking 5 minutes before or after church or before or after a meeting, to find one of the books, sit in a comfortable chair in the Church Library and use your imagination to answer these questions. The books are found in the Children's Religious books under the topic, GOD.



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Mon 8:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.  
 Tues-Thurs 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.  
 24-hour pastoral emergencies:  
 515-428-1779

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