COMMUNITY

A Very Public Faith

by Pr. Eileen

As some of you know, my first introduction to the Industrial Areas Foundation, a national alliance of alliances like AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) was about 16 years ago when I worked for the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good (MACG). I was the office administrator and support staff for the community organizers, but I was also a member of a church that was a member of the alliance, just as our church is a member of AMOS. This meant I made a lot of photocopies but also prepared for, participated in, and helped to teach what we called Leadership Institutes for Public Life. A key element of that training was in the name: Learning the difference between what is public and what is private and why that matters.

For example, in my private life, my father is quite disabled and reliant on Medicare for his health care and housing. For me and my siblings, worrying about whether that coverage will remain sufficient is a real stress. But that stress is actually a public issue in that our family is not alone. We are among hundreds of millions of Americans depending on a social safety net that is increasingly frayed. In identifying what in our private lives are actually public pressures, we can work to relieve them together.

I was reminded of all of this throughout the press coverage and community support we received after our original rainbow banner was vandalized. For many (most?) of us, our faith is a private matter and we come to 6th and Kellogg not to be seen in our worship and work but to simply participate in that worship and work. But when we leave our homes and when we display our faith, be it visually through a cross necklace or in practice through participation in AMOS and Emergency Residence Project and Ames Pridefest, we are making a public statement. Our private faith does have very public components.

And it should. Though our scripture teaches us not to make a big show of our prayer and piety, it also requires that we be a people of the *polis*, a people drawn into the public square by the Holy Spirit that pulls at us all. Which might not always feel good, or even safe. Which is what has made your refusal to retreat in the face of real violence all the more beautiful.

As with my dad's insurance, the stresses of hatred, be it toward women or people of color or queers or Muslims or migrants, causes personal pain, dark nights of the soul. But the solution to alleviate that pain will take all of us coming together, in the bright light of day. And based on what I heard from the larger public, our public faith not only relieves pain for countless people unknown to us, it brings genuine hope. Thank you.

Statement of Solidarity

Offered in worship by David Hansen of the Ames Friends Meeting on Sunday, June 30, 2019.

If I were to ask the woman on the street how she would characterize Quakers, I would probably get a blank stare. If I continued until it made sense to someone, I think she might say "Quakers are quirky." As one example of that, Quakers do not recognize majority rules. There must be a consensus to move forward. If there is any opposition, we need to ponder it more deeply. We call that "seasoning." If that doesn't work, the opposition must step aside to let Meeting proceed--or it is set aside.

At our Meeting for Business last Sunday we deliberated about how we should respond to UCC to show our support after the desecration incident. No one needed to step aside. I was asked to approach Pastor Eileen as to what would be helpful--maybe join in worship or develop a formal message? Pastor Eileen said "we would be delighted for you to join us." I indicated I would like to deliver a message. She must have been curious, but never asked what that message might be. She trusted me. She only said, "Keep it under 4 minutes!"

When a faith building is desecrated, often there are some who want to pull back. "Our message is too strong. We must protect our building and be more careful in our public voice." I hope that doesn't happen here. Out of all the congregations in Ames you were chosen. There must be something right with your message that you were the chosen. We thank your Pastor, leaders and congregation for your public voice about following the teaching of Christ. You have reminded a perhaps complacent community that hate exists in Ames. We thank Pastor Eileen and your congregation for the ways you express your faith.

I also wanted to mention your "One Human Family--we support refugees and our Muslim neighbors" banners. I always delight when I pass by and see not just a yard sign, but the big banners. That statement is so important to what is happening in the world, and in our country today.

It is uplifting to us to be with you today. We thank you for that chance. We are Friends with a capital "F" -- we know that today we are all friends with a small "f".

Pride for All

by Pr. Eileen

On Saturday, September 7 our church will once again have a presence at Ames Pridefest, a "celebration of LGBTQIA+ people living in and around Ames, IA." That presence will include a double booth filled with crafts, prizes people can enter to win, a slideshow about the life of our church, and, I hope, many of us. Because in addition to quite a few shifts for staffing our booths, there is room for every single one of us to come and feel the waves of joy and thanksgiving that is this now annual event. If you have never been, here is what you can expect: a wildly colorful array of flags (often worn as capes), music, tasty treats, the aforementioned crafts and prizes, and more smiles than you will see anywhere else in Ames, even at a graduation or winning football game. And in the wake of our banner vandalism, we can expect to be the recipients of a great number of those smiles. So, if you would like to work a two-hour shift, let me know. Otherwise, save the date and come bear witness to the God of the rainbow.

Pridefest Goodie Prep

Come prep our goodie giveaway bags for Pridefest in the church office conference room on any of the following dates and times:

Wednesday 8/7 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and 5 to 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday 8/21 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and 5 to 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday 8/28 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and 5 to 6:30 p.m.

GENEROSITY

Our 2019-20 Intern, Chaplain Kelsey Plummer
by Pr. Eileen

At the April Executive Board meeting, Ames UCC's leadership voted to accept Kelsey Plummer as a seminary intern for the 2019-20 schoolyear.

Kelsey, who was scheduled to preach at Ames UCC as part of the nationwide UCC Seminary Sunday but was snowed out twice, is a current Chicago Theological Seminary student and halfway through her Master of Divinity degree. Working as a full-time Hospice Chaplain for Hospice of the Midwest, Kelsey spends her days driving through central Iowa meeting with patients and families who are living with terminal illness. Kelsey has extensive experience in worship leadership, in addition to pastoral care. In addition to those roles, her time with us will include some teaching around end of life, Bible study leadership, and exploring the administrative and strategic elements of parish ministry. Kelsey is also a Yoga Alliance certified instructor and may include breathwork, mindfulness and meditation in her time with us.

While Kelsey's denominational background is with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Chicago Theological Seminary is affiliated with the UCC and she was briefly part of Ames UCC:

After graduating from college (nine years ago) and working multiple jobs in Ames I met Sunny. She was one of the regular customers at Burgie's and over the course of many conversations she found out I was a theology nerd, heard my story of feeling on the outside of the church, and she offered for me to come 'hang out with some cool people' at Ames UCC. At a time when I was treading water and unsure if I would ever find the shore, I was welcomed by strangers and was offered communion and community. The summer we spent at Ames UCC has not been forgotten.

When Kelsey isn't studying or Chaplain-ing, she and her spouse, Jon, love to welcome friends to their home for game nights, cooking great food, and great conversation. And, when this Iowa weather allows, they love to spend as much time as they can outside, especially with their two pups.

Are you 70 & 1/2 years of age or older?

Did you know that you can make a qualified charitable distribution from a traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and increase your standard deduction on your taxes? Talk to your tax professional and retirement plan for details. Should you make such a distribution to the church, we will send the required confirmation. Thank you for your generosity!

RELATIONSHIPS

Musings on Unscripted
by Nancy Dunn

Now that Unscripted is winding up, it's time to reflect. It felt pretty risky to start a spiritual practices group when I had little or no experience with any but basic meditation. But with the collaboration of Andrea

Klocke and Linda Hanson, we forged ahead, found a resource book, and scheduled it for Wednesday nights. Since our church is probably more comfortable with talking about spiritual practices, than actually practicing them, I knew it would be a stretch. But in spite of my trepidation, I found spiritual nourishment as we tried the practices which included Mandalas, Lecto Divinio, Meditation, The Daily Examen, and Discernment. I was challenged to take a mid week pause to pray in different ways, giving me new tools for my spiritual practice at home. Just as important, I was getting to know the folks who joined us on Wednesday nights in new and deeper ways.

A Year of Youth Group

by Megan Henson

This year has been an absolute blast. I feel so honored to be surrounded by such amazing kids, week after week. The 6th-12th graders continue to surprise me every day with their quirkiness, insight, and acceptance of all. I am so proud of all of them! As we have gotten to know each other I have learned that humor and authenticity are very important to this group. They expect you to be able to talk about deep life issues, and to be open, nonjudgmental, and accept them for who they are in the present. Here's some highlights of our year:

- Twenty of us celebrated the new year with a Youth Group Lock-In
- We had 10 6^{th}-12^{th} graders come to support our church community through cleaning up after Lenten soup suppers, six weeks in a row!
- Twenty 6^{th}-12^{th} graders participated in a youth-led worship service on Palm Sunday, from the bulletin cover to the sermon
- Ten youth come regularly to our Wednesday night gatherings
- We average twelve youth for Sunday morning coffee
- We will celebrate the graduation of three fabulous seniors this month, and welcome three sixth graders to the group in the fall

As we start planning for next year, I am going to discuss with each of them what they would like to contribute to the group next year and get them more involved in leadership. We will focus next year on developing our traditions and volunteering in ways that are meaningful to us. We will have one event per month over the summer to keep the Youth Group spirit alive! We have plans for Camping, Adventureland, and a Get-The-Youth-Room-Ready-For Fall/Hangout day. Thank you all for your tremendous support!

Studying the Holocaust

by Pr. Eileen

On the Wednesday after Easter I had the opportunity to join our Youth Group along with Jeremy Best, a member of our church and professor of German history. Jeremy and I were there to talk with the youth about the Holocaust. We chose this particular week to gather as it was near Yom HaShoah, the Holocaust Day of Remembrance (May 1).

We began our time together by asking the youth what they already knew about the Holocaust. They shared an awareness that it has to do with Nazis and Jews, as well as a story about the lies the Nazi regime propagated to explain the horrible stench from their new "factories." We then watched an introductory video from the US Holocaust Museum and one about a single town in Galicia featuring scholar Omer Batrtov. Bartov emphasized that in a town of 15,000 there were no such thing as bystanders to the murders of Jewish people: it was an intimate process that involved everyone. In fact, half of all Holocaust deaths were at gun point, person to person.

After the videos, Jeremy guided the conversation: What does it mean to label a group of people as unfit? Why did diversity suddenly become dangerous? Is there such a thing as an innocent bystander? I added questions about whether this could happen again. Group members shared stories about fellow students using swastikas in their school. There have been instances where students of color were not safe at the middle school and stayed home.

My final question to the group was why we need to talk about this in a Christian church. Quickly they named that being a Christian means not murdering people. I shared how our religion has also been used to wrongly justify the expulsion and murder of Jewish people for two thousand years.

I also noted how our church goes out of its way not to be anti-Jewish, not to participate in ideological or physical violence against Jews: In addition to conversations like this, I never use the phrase "Old Testament" to describe the books of the Bible from Genesis through Malachi. The adjective old, particularly in contrast to calling the Christian books of the Bible the New Testament, implies that they are less relevant and of a lower quality. This is not true. These books, which I refer to as the Hebrew Bible in all church materials, stand on their own as a powerful, vital, living witness to God. They are no less important than our Gospels and Letters.

Megan then guided the group looked at artwork done by kids their own age while in concentration camps.

As we all experienced on Palm Sunday, our Youth Group has grown exponentially since increasing the position's hours and hiring Megan. She has crafted a program that gives the participants lots of time to socialize and giggle and an equal amount of time to learn about the world and wonder together where God might be in the midst.

I know all of this sounds different than the youth programs many of us participated in. It is also very different than other youth ministries in our community. Our teens shared stories about friends whose church uses their time to teach the girls (but not the boys) how to care for babies, and students who will not participate in school programs that include teachers who are gay, because that is what their church teaches.

But as the collapse of mainline Protestantism has shown, our old way of catechism and memorization did not work to nurture lifelong learners of faith. What our tradition needs now is young people who understand their faith's values, and how to speak up for them in daily life, rather than the perfect recitation of doctrine.

I am so grateful and so honored to be serving God at a church that is flexible, curious, and deeply committed to seeking, again and again, how to best follow Jesus in discipleship and the Christ in love like a resurrection. Thank you to Megan for all her creative and insightful work and to the parents and guardians of our youth for entrusting us with their nurturance.

Grow Spiritually with Learning Center for Adults

by Lynette Spicer

May 5: What are the Challenges and Rewards of Long Marriages?

Congregation members married 50 years or more are invited to answer questions in a discussion moderated by Pr. Hannah Hannover. Some sample questions for the discussion:

- What is the best part about being together?
- How do you keep married life interesting?

- What time of your life has been most challenging?
- What surprised you the most?
- What happened after 40 years of marriage?
- How do you handle a disagreement?
- What advice would you give?

May 12: Breakfast Potluck

Bring your ideas for topics in Learning Center September 2019 through May 2020 and bring a food dish to share.

Ames UCC 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 tone Wednesday of the month at 2:30 p.m.

May 29: *Trials of the Earth: The True Story of a Pioneer Woman*
by Mary Mann Hamilton (2016 nonfiction, 336 pages)
Discussion leader: Paul Clark

Near the end of her life, Mary Mann Hamilton (1866 - c.1936) began recording her experiences in the backwoods of the Mississippi Delta. The result is this astonishing first-person account of a pioneer woman who braved grueling work, profound tragedy, and a pitiless wilderness (she and her family faced floods, tornadoes, fires, bears, panthers, and snakes) to protect her home in the early American South.

June 19: Select titles for upcoming book club year, September through May.

The book club takes a break for the summer in July and August.

Ames UCC Church Library Updates & Book Reviews

by Barbara Faidley

During the last few months, Bethesda Lutheran has had to reduce their library collection. Their librarian contacted me and offered us the possibility of getting some books from them. We took them up on the offer. We got a s series of children's books called Talking with God. In each of the books there are 3 short stories based on bible verses. The stories are all situations that children could find themselves in. They are all written by Elspeth Campbell Murphy and illustrated by Jane E. Nelson. Find them in the library in the children's cubbies under the heading "About God."

We have also received a set of DVDs by PBS that are biographies of 10 of the presidents. They are on the top shelf of one of bookcases in the DVD section. One is also displayed on the bookshelf in the hallway across from the library.

Another new book we received as a donation is *Atlas of World Religions*. This book has maps on every page and text about the spread of different religions and where those religions are most dominant today. Religions covered are Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, religion in Australia and the Pacific Islands, African religions and Indigenous religions. This book is on the adult display shelf.

Thank you to everyone who has so generously made donations to the Church Library. Your donations have made a huge difference. Thank you very much.

Review: *Praying Like Jesus* by James Mulholland

Praying Like Jesus is written by James Mulholland, an ordained minister (American Baptist) who has served congregations in the United Methodist and Quaker denominations. He has worked for years with food and shelter programs for the homeless, prison ministries and youth community service organizations. The subtitle to the book is "The Lord's Prayer in a Culture of Prosperity." The author feels that prayer today bears little resemblance to the kind Jesus taught. For many, it has become a means of personal success and material gain, taking the form of a shopping list rather than a transforming spiritual discipline. The author states, "The point of prayer is not to tell God what you want, but to receive what we need. It is not approaching God with our demands, but listening for God's leading. It is not seeking our will, but learning to discern God's will. Prayer isn't about me—it is about God." In the book he shows how authentic prayer will lead us away from the self-interest of the prevailing culture of greed and move us toward the compassion, sacrifice, and love that are the hallmarks of the kingdom of God. This book is in the section "Prayers and Meditations."

WORSHIP

Fresh Eyes, Familiar Eyes

by Karen Bovenmyer and Laura Deal

Karen became a member this year. Laura has been a member since 1968. Here is how our congregation "looks" through their fresh eyes and familiar eyes.

What one to three words describe Ames UCC?

Karen: Welcoming, loving, laughing.

Laura: Safe-space, family, Emmanuel

How do you experience God/holiness here today?

Karen: Almost by accident, I washed up on the shores of UCC as a broken thing the first weekend of January 2019. My hand was shaken the moment I walked in the door and I was greeted with friendly smiles and faces all the way to the sanctuary. I felt so sad, like I was crawling, oozing my way into the service where I could rest and pray for help. Just being at UCC started to lift me up. God's love shines out of every pore of the people who worship in this building. That is what I have spent 25 years looking for—a church that welcomes everyone as Jesus did, without judgement, thrumming to the tune of "God is Love." I'm experiencing spirituality through singing in the choir, and on "special music Sundays" when I'm in the congregation listening, I sob my ways through Reverend Eileen's sermons and come out feeling healed. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I was crying in the pew next to Laura, who comforted me and listened to me with God's love. I've never found a place and people who speak to my heart so fully.

Laura: I feel God's presence through music, sharing prayers, receiving the message and enjoying the children's message. I enjoy talking with others who have come to worship, and catching up on what's happening in their world. I feel the presence of my mother and sister, here where we spent so much time together. I am moved by the beauty of our sanctuary. I love the way light

shines through the descending dove and the cross on our stained glass windows. I first came to this place as a child, when we moved to central Iowa. There was a strong Sunday school program at that time. Church was more traditional in style. We recited the Apostle's Creed, sang the Doxology, etc. I was confirmed as a ninth-grader, and as many of my contemporaries, I stopped coming during high school. I came back as an adult and instantly felt at home.

How does Sunday worship speak to the rest of your week?

Karen: The words of God's love and forgiveness stay with me as I work through my loss and grief, depression and anxiety. At UCC, everyone is welcome at the table, and an open heart and mind and willingness to do good for all our neighbors. I feel electrified in ways I never had before with new understandings about suicide, LGBT, and immigration. It's refreshing to hear a narrative different from the cultural bombardment I get the rest of the week and it's one that resonates with me. Furthermore, I feel a great relief getting to explore my feelings during worship in silent prayer that makes the rest of the week much lighter.

Laura: When I leave Ames UCC on Sunday, my spirit is renewed. I feel blessed to be a part of this congregation. I continue to pray throughout the week for those with concerns, and celebrate with those who announced joys. I look forward to coming on Wednesday for bible study, and to ring the Peace bell. I am happy that I get the chance to return next Sunday!

Lenten Prayers of the People

by Nancy Dunn, Jan Flora, and Andrea Klocke

During Lent we have two banners up in the sanctuary. One reads "reflect" and the other "pray." In order to facilitate the first, we had three periods of silence in worship. For the second, I invited congregants to join me in praying the pastoral prayers of the people. What follows is the text of their offerings. —Pr. Eileen

Nancy Dunn
God, as you hear our prayers, help us to share the burdens of others….the burdens of sickness, caregiving, fear, despair, grief, and loneliness. We remember that as we are caring and connecting with other, we are invoking the holiness in all. May we offer ourselves and others an acceptance that is transformative.

Jan Flora
Dear Jesus, whose life we contemplate intensely in these 40 days to Easter, guide us in these times that often seem to us as tension-filled and violent as the final week of your life on earth. We are enraged against injustice, much as when you overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple.

- We are enraged that a white supremacist killed 50 people in two Mosques in New Zealand and saddened that that shooting occurred a year and a day after the Valentine's Day shooting of 17 students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.
- We are enraged that, after this latest shooting, the Iowa House is poised to support a bill that would eliminate background checks in Iowa, allow guns on school parking lots, and in courthouses.
- We are enraged that the school massacre in Brazil, carried out a few days ago and inspired by Columbine, hardly reached the consciousness of people in the U.S.
- I am enraged that my government continues to incarcerate children in cages and separate some from their parents at the border, that perhaps thousands of children are still unaccounted for, that over 5,000 unaccompanied children from Central America continue to be apprehended at the border each month, and that the head of homeland security brags before Congress that the government in on target to apprehend nearly a million immigrants across this country this year.

I pray that my – our – outrage will be turned to what Ernie Cortez calls "cold anger" so that we do not just give our thoughts and prayers to the victims, but are energized to right the wrongs, to hate evil while recognizing the humanity of the evil-doers.

The evil in this world often generates courageous action against it. We give thanks for the bold, statesman-like sermon given by our pastor on Ash Wednesday and the courageous leadership from the youth in engaging in climate strikes this week at Ames High School and ISU. We could do worse than be led by children.

We thank you for your life and teachings of love and humility, but also for your zealotry in a time of oppression. In the words of the prophet Micah, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8.)

Andrea Klocke
Creator God, we arrived to this space feeling the sunshine on our backs as we entered through the doors. We arrived with our hearts ready – ready for connection, ready for comfort, ready to listen, ready for peace, ready for love.

Yet even with our ready, willing hearts -- we also arrived <u>weary</u>.

We arrived in bodies which provide their own challenges over time – illness, injury, or trauma to our mental or physical selves is a reality which many of us, or those we love, face on a daily basis.

Our joys we celebrate today, large and small, are often tempered by other news - that of injustice, poverty, hatred, and violence - which in turn stirs up anger and sadness, and also sometimes feelings of hopelessness. It threatens to diminish our ability to see the "God spark" in others (and possibly ourselves).

We listen. We pray. We sing.

We do all these things in bodies and spirits which are both joyful and sad, energized and tired, and we seek YOU through it all.

As the warmth of Spring warms the soil and readies it for planting, let us embrace this season of Lent to ready our own heart for what can grow when we are connected to you, and to each other. Let us sow crops of

forgiveness, service, and most importantly love as we leave this place today.

Summer Worship Schedule

In order to accommodate our Hobbit Hill hosts in June and a special event with our fellow worshipers at First Christian in July, we will not change the worship time in the summer. We will remain at 10:30 a.m. throughout June, July, and August. Details below.

June

6/9 Pentecost! Please wear red, if you are able.
6/16 Regular worship at Ames UCC
6/23 Worship at Hobbit Hill (5508 Lincoln Way, Ames) followed by potluck lunch
6/30 Regular worship at Ames UCC

Joint worship with First Christian Church in July

7/7 Pr. Mary Jane Button-Harrison preaches at Ames UCC
7/14 Pr. Eileen Gebbie preaches at First Christian Church
7/21 Pr. *April Johnson,* Minister of Reconciliation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, preaches at First Christian
7/28 Pr. Eileen Gebbie preaches at Ames UCC

August

8/4 Worship in the park with Ames UCC, First Christian, and First Baptist
8/11, 18, 25 Regular worship at Ames UCC

September

9/1 Regular worship at Ames UCC
9/8 Rally Day! The start of our program year.

JUNE 23
WORSHIP AT
HOBBIT'S HILL

Contact Ames UCC
217 6th Street, Ames, IA 50010
515-232-9323
office@amesucc.org

Mon-Thurs 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
2:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.
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Ames, IA 50010

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