

**Ames First United
Methodist Church**



April 2026 Newsletter

Words from Rev. Nikki Ross Bishop

“Just ___ shopping days ‘til Christmas!”

How many times did you hear that last December? Of course, that’s one of the ways that retailers help to encourage you to make your Christmas celebration plans.

What preparations did you make for Christmas last year – buying and wrapping gifts, getting things like holiday get-togethers on your calendar, baking cookies and preparing the Christmas feast?

My guess would be that you’ve been making some similar preparations for Easter: buying the Easter candy, getting the Holy Week services on the calendar, cooking for the Easter brunch.

But a short time ago I heard a person on a radio program say something I’ve thought for awhile. He said that most people, and even many churches, spend a lot of time and effort just ahead of Christmas and Easter; what we should be doing as Christians is spending all of our days putting the lessons of Christmas and Easter into practice in our lives.

Depending on when this newsletter is mailed, we have around 280 days till Christmas and just a few days until Easter this year; how are we going to live in the truth of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection? We give gifts on December 25th; how will we be a gift to others April 5th and beyond? Instead of an Easter Brunch, how will we feed the souls and spirits of people in the middle of July?

May we live each day in the joy of Resurrection!

Every day to us is Easter, with its resurrection song.

Seeking to live each day like it’s Resurrection Sunday:

Pastor Nikki



MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

April 2 7:00pm

First United Methodist Church

We will join with our neighbors, United Church of Christ and First Christian Church, to share Holy Communion and remember Christ's arrest and crucifixion. A combined choir will provide special music.

Easter Worship

SATURDAY, APRIL 4.

5:30PM

IN THE CHAPEL

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

10:00AM

**IN THE SANCTUARY
AND LIVESTREAM AT**

www.youtube.com/@amesfirstumc



Please note the office will be closed Monday April 6 for Easter Monday.



On **April 12**, we will have a Quarterly Update after the Sunday service in the sanctuary.

We will share:

The progress on our 2026 goals for the church which support our mission, "To make disciples of Jesus, who serve beyond the walls".

Financial status.

Review of the proposed Leadership Board structure to replace the church council in 2027.

On May 3, Pastor Lilian Seagren, District Superintendent, will be leading a Church Conference after the Sunday service to vote on the resolution to move to the Leadership Board. The Quarterly Update is your opportunity to confirm your understanding and ask any questions that you might have about it.

A graphic for a sermon series featuring a red flame on the left and a white wavy line on the right. The text is arranged in a structured layout with various font weights and colors.

Love Boldly
Serve Joyfully
Lead Courageously
Uniting 30,000 congregations worldwide.

April 11- May 17
Sermon Series

May 17 will be Miracle Sunday, a one-time, denomination-wide special offering to support The Endowment for Theological Education outside the United States.

*Vision of The UMC:
The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, & lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.*

April Stewardship Message

As we near tax season deadline, many families are thinking about wise stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to them. One often-overlooked benefit of faithful giving is that donations to the church can also play a role in managing personal taxes.

Combining the possibility of reducing your taxable income while also supporting our mission of “Making disciples of Jesus who serve beyond the walls” seems like a win-win opportunity.

While tax considerations should never be the primary motivation for generosity, thoughtful planning can allow families to give more intentionally and with greater impact. As Scripture reminds us, *“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

If you have questions about how your giving fits into your overall financial picture, we encourage you to consult a qualified tax professional. Thank you for your continued faithfulness and support of the work God is doing through Ames First United Methodist Church

Kevin Hinders – Stewardship Lead



United
Women
in Faith

Thank you to those who joined us for the Day of Prayer and Self-Denial meeting on Thursday, March 5th. We met for a light meal and a program about the National Mission Institutions' work with children and youth.

Silver Anniversary Circle made casseroles and cookies for Romero House at their March 12 meeting. Thank you to everyone involved!

The FUMC Nevada United Women in Faith invites you to Guest Night on April 14 at 5:30 pm. Representatives from the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry will share their experiences of their ministry to the homeless in Des Moines.

April 19 is our Food From our Heritage Dinner! We hope everyone will join us for fellowship and delicious food at our UWFaith dinner after church (11:15-1:00)! Proceeds (free-will offering) will go to missions and projects of UWFaith. If you'd like to provide a dish from your family heritage or any special dish, please contact Donna Banker at 515-419-4966.

Other important dates:

April 25: Day Apart at FUMC Des Moines

May15-17: UWFaith Assembly in Indianapolis

July 11: Guest Day with presentation by Romero House

July 18: Mission U in Ankeny

October 17: Fall Fair!

If you'd like to find out more about UWFaith and its upcoming activities, please contact Jackie DeLay jstockdaledelay@yahoo.com

April Missions Moment

Missions and Outreach

Special Sundays: Native American Ministries Sunday

--Observed the second Sunday after Easter (April 19, 2026)

--Empowers local outreach and educates Native American seminary students to serve God faithfully. The offering also helps preserve a rich cultural heritage.

--25% to General Board of Higher Education for scholarships for Native Americans attending UM schools of theology. 25% General Board of Global Ministries to support the Native American Urban Initiative. 50% retained by the Iowa Annual Conference to support Iowa Native American Ministries.

--To donate write a check to First United Methodist Church and write Native American Ministries Sunday on the memo line.

Thanks to the following folks who volunteered at Food at First on Feb. 26, 2026:

Donna Banker, Jim Gilbert, Kim Gilbert, Amanda Gordon, Stephen Loucks, Nancy Tamashunas, Steve Hanlin, Darlys Orth, Carolyn Yorgensen, and Dean Swyter.



Thanks to the following folks who volunteered at Ames Romero House on March 3, 2026:

Charli Hanway and Amanda Gordon



Ways to Serve

Missions and Outreach

Sharing this opportunity in our community:
Volunteers needed for **Feeding Haiti's Kids meal packing event [one day]** on Friday, April 17, 2026 at Northminster Presbyterian Church.

3 shifts: 2pm-4pm, 4pm-6pm and 6pm-8pm

Shifts will be 2 hours (to include registration, orientation, packing)

Participants should arrive 15-30 minutes ahead of their shift.

Please pass on the information to family, friends and co-workers.

Feeding Haiti's Kids



**Friday
April 17, 2026**



Gather some friends and join the community as we package **150,000 nutritious meals** for Haiti's children and make a positive impact on those facing food insecurity.

Choose a 2-hour shift to fit your schedule.

Questions?
ames.feed.haiti.kids@gmail.com

To Volunteer or Donate go to:
<https://amesnpc.org/haiti-2/>

Northminster Presbyterian Church
1416 20TH ST.
ACROSS FROM AMES HIGH



Scan to volunteer or donate

"...whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me." Matthew 25:40
Sponsors: Northminster. Then Feed Just One. United Christians International.

UMCOR Sunday Donations:

Thank you to all who have donated! So far the total reached is \$3,030! The office is still collecting donation checks. Your generosity makes sure the Church is equipped to respond whenever and wherever help is needed without delay.

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10 2026 and we will once again "Blanket the World with Love" by donating blankets through Church World Service (CWS). Watch the Weekly Words for details and donation forms.

Midwest Mission Donations



Have you been spring cleaning?
Have you found those old crutches you used a few years ago or maybe a walker that Grandma needed or was it that sewing machine you used in high school?
Did a neighbor or friend mention they have things that need a new "home"?
Don't send them to the landfill! Those things and more can be put to good use by Midwest Mission.

What do they need?

- * medical equipment (crutches, walkers, wheel chairs, shower chairs, orthopedic boots, canes, slings...)
- * sewing machines (both electric and treadle)
- * fabric (1+ yard pieces) and sewing notions
- * bikes (no "skinny" tires please)

They refurbish as needed and send them far and near to people who need them.

If you have questions or need help getting items to the church, please contact Carol Miller (515-290-3843).
THANK YOU for all the donations we've had! Let's see how soon we need to request the Midwest Mission trailer to make another stop at FUMC.



April showers may bring May flowers.
But we all know that summer heat brings high air conditioning bills.

Help us prepare by participating in "31 Days of Giving" in May.

Our challenge to the congregation is to fill up every day on the May Utility Calendar.

A donation of \$135 pays the utilities for a day for our beautiful church.

Help us keep it cool this summer.

The Utility Calendar is posted in the Fellowship Hall, or you can contact the office to sign up for a date. We hope everyone will sign up in April, so that May is full before the month arrives!

Thanks in advance,
Your Ames First UMC Finance Committee



Graduate Recognition Sunday will be April 12 at our 10:00am service. This is for all graduates from high school, trade school, university, post-grad, and anything in between and beyond. If you're a graduate or have someone in your family who is graduating, be sure to get the graduate Information submitted through this google form by April 6. <https://forms.gle/JSmMoeqeSBxJtEHa7>

There are bibles for our high school graduates set up in Fellowship Hall for all of you to write a special message to our graduates. Here are our high school graduates:

Quin Baker, Dunkin Bearson, Julia Fuerst, Sydney Gelder, Jacob Goodman, Evan Nelson, Clara Newton, Connor Pepper, Miranda Ross, Savanna Smith, Audrey Spiess, Leo Sullivan, Emmett Van Haecke



Children's Sunday School

During April, the children will explore stories of the Old and New Testament through games, art, and mission focus by "Bee-ing a Blessing" as part of the Helpful Hive! There is no Sunday school on Easter Sunday. Sunday school meets from 9:00am - 9:45am beginning in the Sanctuary for ages 3 - 5th grade.



WINTER OLYMPICS MAY HAVE JUST WRAPPED BUT VBS 2026 WILL CONTINUE ALL THAT FUN WITH SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE! JUNE 22-25, 8:30AM - 11:30AM REGISTER TO PARTICIPATE OR VOLUNTEER TODAY!



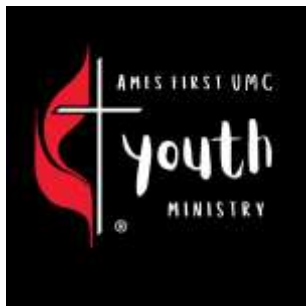
<https://ames-first-umc.mycokesburyvbs.com/>

The Winter Olympics may have just wrapped up but we get to continue that fun during our Summer VBS 2026 with this year's "Snowball Mountain Challenge!" *Snowball Mountain Challenge invites kids to an exciting winter sports event where they become Challengers, gearing up for frosty games, snowy surprises, and hands-on lessons about resilience and faith. They will come to realize that with the strength*

God provides, they can share their gifts, be brave, give their all, pray, and hope. Your kids will be guided daily by the energetic Activities Director and the lovable Ollie the Arctic Seal puppet, who is reporting on the events. Challengers aren't just playing games. Using their Challenge Companion (the Bible), they learn to draw strength from their faith through powerful stories, while connecting the learnings to Bible Stories and Lift Lessons (Key Learnings). With a unique winter theme and solid theology at its core, Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS delivers joy and meaning in equal measure, teaching kids that "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NRSV).

ALL are invited to help decorate on Sunday, June 21 beginning at around 11:15am. VBS will be Monday – Thursday, June 22-25 from 8:30am – 11:30am with the optional early drop off starting at 7:45am and late pick up until 12:15pm. Registration for participants is for 4 year olds through those just finishing 5th grade. Volunteers can be from those just finishing 6th grade up to any age!

Register to participate or volunteer TODAY at <https://ames-first-umc.mycokesburyvbs.com>



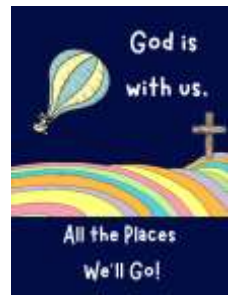
YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL | SUNDAYS AT 9:00AM

Both groups will begin the series “Anthem” during the month of April. No Sunday school on Easter Sunday, April 5.

Here’s a series overview:

When you hear the word “worship,” you might think of a church building, a choir, your favorite worship song, or maybe a special tradition. Worship takes a lot of forms, but sometimes we make the mistake of thinking worship is something it’s not — or, at least, something much smaller than what it really is. You can worship through song and meaningful traditions, but when’s the last time you worshiped by going outside? Or cleaning up your neighborhood? Or making a friend? Or telling God you’re angry? In this 4-week series, we’ll explore the book of Psalms (worship songs to God) as we discover that worship might be bigger than we ever imagined. Maybe worship isn’t just an anthem we sing, but an anthem we live by, worshiping with all of creation, worshiping to remember what God has done, worshiping even when it’s difficult, and worshiping together because we’re God’s family.





Youth-led Worship Weekend

April 11-12 will be youth-led worship weekend. Our middle and high school students will lead us through all aspects of worship that they planned from beginning to end. We will have special music, a skit, Up with Puppets, and the message will be from high school senior, Savanna Smith. Be sure to be present for this special weekend!

Confirmation Corner

Our Confirmation students will have one last class session on April 12. Confirmation is April 25-26. On Saturday, April 25, the students will be introduced to those at the Saturday service. Following the service, they will have a special dinner together and a rehearsal for the confirmation service that will take place Sunday morning, April 26 at 10:00am. There will also be a special reception for them during coffee hour that morning at 9:15am.

Here are our confirmands, their parents, and their mentors:

Macintyre Anderson, son of Justin & Sadie Anderson,

Mentor: Aaron Hard

Kaden Clausen, son of Justin & Laura Clausen,

Mentor: Mikel Hansen

Mara Dixon, daughter of Tony & Karla Dixon,

Mentor: Ruth DeBoer

Lucas Dressler, son of Levi & Julie Dressler,

Mentor: Jim Miller

Easton Lukacik, son of Chris & Kathy Lukacik,

Mentor: Pete Peterson

Wyatt Spiess, son of Tory & Eva Spiess,

Mentor: Ellen Johnsen



YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Young Adults meet once a month for a meal, and small groups gather at other times for Bible study. This group nurtures faith in ways that are not stressful, but fit each person's comfort level. This is an opportunity to share life's blessings and struggles with one another, work on a central faith together, and look for ways to make a difference in this world. Please contact AFUMCYA@gmail.com if you would like to join or would like more information.

ADULT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAYS

Faith and Reason 11:15am, Sundays

This group has a strong focus on faith and social action. They use a variety of video-based lessons, articles from various organizations, and books from noted writers and thinkers from around the world, as they discuss the relationship between religious fundamentalism and democracy, equality, and human rights. Join them for an invigorating discussion! **Multipurpose Room**

Coffee Talk 8:50am - 9:35am, Sundays

This class is designed to help persons grow in their personal relationship with God. Through videos and discussion, we delve deeper into the topics presented through the current Lenten sermon series. Bring your coffee (and donuts too if you'd like!) We wrap up by 9:35am so there is time after for fellowship before worship service begins at 10am. **Conference Room**

ADULT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAYS

Faith and Reason 11:15am, Sundays

This group has a strong focus on faith and social action. They use a variety of video-based lessons, articles from various organizations, and books from noted writers and thinkers from around the world, as they discuss the relationship between religious fundamentalism and democracy, equality, and human rights. Join them for an invigorating discussion! **Multipurpose Room**

Coffee Talk 8:50am - 9:35am, Sundays

This class is designed to help persons grow in their personal relationship with God. Through videos and discussion, we delve deeper into the topics presented through the current Lenten sermon series. Bring your coffee (and donuts too if you'd like!) We wrap up by 9:35am so there is time after for fellowship before worship service begins at 10am. **Conference Room**

Friends in Faith 6:00pm Second and fourth Sundays

We use the Serendipity Bible as a starting point, but you can use any Bible you have. We open with Joys and Concerns. There will be an opening question. Then we will read a passage and consider questions from the Serendipity Bible and have discussion. We close with a prayer as close to 7:00 as possible. If you happen to have something YOU would like to talk about some Sunday, feel free to bring it up for discussion. **Conference Room or Zoom**

WEDNESDAYS

Men's Weekly Study 6:00am Wednesdays

We read the Bible passage for the upcoming Sunday service and discuss how these scriptures relate to us and our lives. All are welcome. **Panera**

Wonderful Wednesday Women 10:00am

Wednesdays

This group is not only a bible study but a way to look at the meaningful design of the worship service and find varying ways we can each connect to it. We are also a great support system for one another as we go through different times and events in our lives and share our own life experiences and faith journeys. Contact Nicole Smith, nicole@amesfirstumc.org for more information.

Conference Room and Zoom

Play Ball!

Like to play softball? Join the Ames First United Methodist softball team in the Ames Interfaith Co-Rec Slow Pitch League. Season is May 5 through July 21. Games are played on Tuesday nights in South River Valley Park, usually two one-hour games each week, between 6:00 and 10:00. Competition is friendly. You must be a member and/or attendee of Ames FUMC, or an immediate family member, and be at least 17 years old (no upper age limit). Teams must include at least two females.

Questions? Interested? Contact William Edwards at wedwards@iastate.edu or 515-520-3988 for more information.

Registration Now Open for the 2026

#WeAreUMC RAGBRAI Team!

Have you wanted to ride in RAGBRAI, but didn't have a team? Are you interested in seeing how RAGBRAI can be a spiritual practice? Join United Methodists from across the nation for a week of faith, friendship, and hospitality as we ride RAGBRAI — the world's oldest and largest bike tour across Iowa, July 18–25, 2026. This ministry-on-wheels isn't just a ride — it's a fresh expression of church with daily devotions, prayer, meaningful conversations, and support along the route. All riders and support crew are welcome, but space is limited, so reserve your spot early! Learn more here:

www.iaumc.org/WeAreUMC-RAGBRAI



Greeters

Thank you to all who volunteer to be such a welcoming face of Ames First UMC.

April 2—Maundy Thursday—Judy Roe, Rhonda Lofstedt, Greg Lofstedt

April 5—Kevin Hinders, Margaret Torrie, Kris Hinders, Steve Hanlin, Karen Kerper

April 12—Youth Sunday

April 19—Karen Kerper, Cathy Webb, Diana Schwendinger

April 26—Margaret Torrie, Nancy Tamashunas, Steve Hanlin

If you are interested in being a greeter, please email Paige Brincks at nickpaigebrincks@gmail.com. Paige is our Worship Team Volunteer who coordinates greeters.

We are glad you are here!



	5:30	10:00	Online	Total
2/ 7 & 8/26	26	116	93	235
2/14& 15/26	23	105	83	211
2/21& 22/26	17	118	89	224
2/28 & 3/1/26	23	119	65	207

Great thanks to all who donated towards the Utilities in February! You make our days bright.

Joan Andersen, Keith & Jean Bailey, Delores Ball, Marlene Bell, Carol Deppe, William & Jane Edwards, Steve & Mary Beth Hanlin, Becky Jordan, Ginny LaVelle, Lonnie & Karen Mannes, Steven & Jean McBreen, Gary & Peggy McConnell, Jim & Carol Miller, Loren Mortvedt, Ralph & Joyce Neill, LaVone Newell, Pete & Sally Peterson, Joanne Van Dyke, Neil & Barb Van Slyke

**Ames First United Methodist Church
516 Kellogg Ave Ames, IA 50010**

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Amanda Gordon,
Senior Pastor

Rev. Nikki Ross Bishop,
Associate Pastor

Nicole Smith
Christian Education Director

Ilene Riitano, Organist and Music Director

Julie Minot, Office Manager

Vivian Severson, Office Assistant

Reid Cummer, Business Manager

Kris Hinders, Digital Coordinator

James Minot, Maintenance Custodian

Matt Woodworth, Part-time Custodian

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Mon-Thurs 9:00 - 4:00

Friday 9:00 - 1:00

Email: office@amesfirstumc.org

515.232.2750 / www.amesfirstumc.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 188
Ames, IA

