



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR MARCH 23, 2025
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

“What God does first and best and most is to trust God’s people with their moment in history.
God trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of God’s whole community.”

Walter Brueggemann

PRELUDE “*Chant de Paix*”

Jean Langlais

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Marsha Lowe, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

***CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 105)**

Let the heart of those who seek God rejoice.

Turn for help to God, who is your strength

[Unison]

and seek God's presence always.

Let us worship God.

*** HYMN 412 (vs. 1, 3, & 4)**

"Eternal God, Whose Power Upholds"

Eternal God, whose power upholds

Both flower and flaming star,

To whom there is no here nor there,

No time, no near nor far,

No alien race, no foreign shore,

No child unsought, unknown:

O send us forth, Thy prophets true,

To make all lands Thine own!

O God of truth, whom science seeks

And reverent souls adore,

Who lightest every earnest mind

Of every clime and shore:

Dispel the gloom of error's night,

Of ignorance and fear,

Until true wisdom from above

Shall make life's pathway clear!

O God of beauty, oft revealed

In dreams of human art,

In speech that flows to melody,

In holiness of heart:

Teach us to turn from sinfulness

That shuts our hearts to Thee,

Till all shall know the loveliness

Of lives made fair and free!

***OPENING PRAYER**

As this day and week begin, O God, help us to see the new things you are doing in our lives and in the world.

When we are worn out by what is immediately in front of us, lift our eyes toward the horizon, that we might see the possibility of your realm before us.

When we are held back by what we have done or failed to do, remind us of your forgiveness and put a new spirit within us.

When we are unsure of where we are going, give us strength to follow in the ways of Jesus Christ.

Accept our prayers and our worship as you have accepted us. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#412)**

**O God of righteousness and grace,
Seen in the Christ, Your Son,
Whose life and death reveal Your face,
By whom Your will was done:
Help us to spread Your gracious reign
Till greed and hate shall cease,
And kindness dwell in human hearts,
And all the earth find peace!**

ANTHEM *“Ubi Caritas”* Maurice Duruflé

TIME OF PRAYER

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom 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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Choral Response

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory *“Beloved Jesus, Here We Stand”* Marcel Dupré

*Response

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ, all creatures here below,
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

(The children are dismissed to Children’s Church)

SCRIPTURE LESSON Joel 2:12-14

PSALM 63:1-8

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.

**Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

For your loving-kindness is better than life itself;

my lips shall give you praise.

**So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.**

My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

**when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.**

For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

**My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 13:1-9

SERMON “Finding Strength in Uncertain Times”

* HYMN 343 “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service”

**Called as partners in Christ’s service,
Called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment
Fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing,
Side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring
To fulfill God’s chosen end.**

**Christ’s example, Christ’s inspiring,
Christ’s clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering,
Reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer,
All God’s people, young and old,
Blending human skills together
Gracious gifts from God unfold.**

**Thus new patterns for Christ’s mission,
In a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other’s burdens,
Breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision,
Words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action,
Make us colleagues, free and fair.**

**So God grant us for tomorrow
Ways to order human life**

**That surround each person's sorrow
With a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living,
Our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving
Hope and confidence and peace.**

*BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE "Prelude & Fugue in G Minor," BWV 558 J.S. Bach

Cover Art: Gogh, Vincent van, 1853-1890. "In the Orchard, or, Gardener near a Gnarled Apple Tree," from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=55406> [retrieved March 20, 2025]. Original source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_In_the_Orchard_-_1883.jpg. Public Domain.

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:3-4 (adapted), *A New Zealand Prayer Book*.

Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Christian Education:	Hope Spragg
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Dr. Chris Nakielski
Children's Choir Director	Rachel Burchett
Office Manager	Jenn Harden

TODAY

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Christian Education for all ages	9:15 am
Worship Service	10:15 am
Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall	After Worship
Choir Rehearsal	11:30 am
Bible Study	11:30 am

TUESDAY

❖ Church Council	7:00 pm
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WEDNESDAY

❖ New Member Class	7:00 pm
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NEXT SUNDAY

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Christian Education for all ages	9:15 am
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Choir Rehearsal
Bible Study

11:30 am
11:30 am

WE'RE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING.

Everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall after worship.

COMMUNITIES ACTING IN CRISIS: On the Sundays in Lent, Bill Lovin will lead the Adult Education sessions, looking at "Communities Acting in Crisis." We'll explore how Christian communities responded to protect people, stand up for the rights of others and themselves, and challenge authorities in difficult times. Join us around the fireplace in Rockwood Hall at 9:15 a.m.

8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY: The Rev. Ann Molsberry is offering an 8-week Bible study that promises to cover the whole Bible in one 8-week sweep. We will use *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* by Bernhard Anderson. We had 12 disciples show up for the first class and we all fit nicely in the library!! We will meet AFTER worship at 11:30 in the library every Sunday in March and April except Easter Sunday. Everyone is invited. We decided not to have lunch together...but bring your book, your Bible and your curiosity!

A NEW MEMBER CLASS WILL BE HELD on Wednesday, March 26 & April 2 at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in joining Congregational UCC or would like more information about who we are, please talk with Bill Lovin.

The Women's Reading Group is reading *In the Sanctuary of Women* by Jan Richardson. We will gather in Rockwood Hall on April 12 at 10:00 to discuss Chapter 2, "A Habit of the Wildest Bounty, The Book of Brigid". All women of the church are invited.

JOIN US FOR AN INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE TRIP! Are you looking to deepen your connection with our church family while serving others? This summer, we are excited to pilot a **mini-service trip** to rekindle our church's tradition of traveling and making a difference in high-need communities. From **July 20-26, 2025**, we will journey to **Asheville, NC**, for a week of meaningful work and fellowship. To gauge interest and determine if we have enough participants for the trip, we invite you to see the **sign up in Rockwood Hall** for more information. If you're available and interested, please sign up—let's serve, grow, and connect together!

CAN YOU HELP PROVIDE BREAKFAST? To reduce single-use packaging and highly processed food in Sunday school-provided breakfasts, we are looking for help providing freshly baked or cooked breakfast items and fresh fruit. Label and drop off items in the refrigerator or kitchen the week before or in the morning before 9:05.

HELP WITH MEALS FOR MEMBERS: Occasionally, members of our congregation who are injured or ill can use a meal prepared for them. Our Membership Board wants to be ready when the need arises. If you can help provide an occasional meal, please sign up on the sheet in Rockwood Hall. Thanks!

HELP WITH SLEEPING MATS STILL NEEDED: With our winter weather just around the corner, the need for more sleeping mats for the homeless is growing! By contributing your plastic bags from your purchases we can help the homeless! Bring your clean, unneeded, plastic grocery bags, or similar plastic bags from your purchases here, to Rockwood Hall. We will see to it that they are delivered.

THE AGAPE CAFÉ serves a free, hot, breakfast dine-in or to-go for our neighbors in the Iowa City area experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity. We are celebrating our 32nd anniversary at our annual in-person fundraiser on Saturday, March 29, from 8 am - 11 am at Old Brick in Iowa City. Come have a great breakfast and support our good work! If you can't attend in person, you can donate via the QR code below.



AGUDAS ACHIM CONGREGATION AND IOWA CITY JEWS (THEIR PUBLIC SPACE DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE) ARE ORGANIZING THEIR SECOND PEACE & JUSTICE SEDER. *"At a time of vulnerability, the liberating message of Passover inspires us. Join us as we grapple with the challenges of justice, democracy, and peace at home and abroad. Help us to celebrate community and our common strivings for a better world."* All welcome: whether you're Jewish, Jew-ish, Jew-curious, Just Plain Human or any other faith/no faith!

They will be gathering before Passover and Easter on Sunday April 6th at the Senior Center in downtown Iowa City. Doors open at 6:15 pm, Seder starts 6:30 pm, festive potluck meal at (approx) 7:30 pm. Please bring a vegetarian dish (no flour or pasta products) to share. Dishes to be served at room temperature. Please RSVP at rsvp@agudasachimic.org (with 'peace and justice seder' in the header of your email) by April 3. Seating is limited.

JOHNSON COUNTY VETERANS FOR PEACE is sponsoring a public readings of two important speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the anniversary of his assassination. This year they will hold the readings on April 4, 11:00-6:00 at the Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center, 220 S. Gilbert Street. Members of the congregation can read a short segment of one of the speeches. Folks are encouraged to drop by anytime between 11:00-6:00 to read a segment or to listen to the speeches.

The VFP acknowledgment of Dr. King's commitment to peace is one of the significant actions that VFP 161 takes each year. This event is an important way in which the chapter can lead the community in a public demonstration of our values and priorities -- values and priorities that the UCC shares.

- Is America Addicted to War?
MLK Jr. warned that Vietnam was a symptom of a deeper sickness—an endless cycle of militarism draining resources from justice.

- Does How We Spend Our Money Signal Spiritual Death?
MLK Jr. warned that prioritizing war over social uplift leads to moral and societal decline.
- Is It Already Too Late?
MLK Jr. warned that history is filled with nations that waited too long to act—justice demands action now.

Donna Hirst, member of the VFP-MLK Planning Team

CONGREGATIONAL UCC DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND VISUAL ARTIST, HOPE SPRAGG, is part of “Elusive Balance”, a traveling group exhibition composed of Iowa Artist/Mothers that explores the challenges of finding balance within artist and mother/caregiver identities. As there is no one way to embody motherhood, there is a diverse range of artists and artwork. “Elusive Balance” is running through April 5 at Public Space One North Gallery, 229 N. Gilbert St, Iowa City. A family-friendly opening reception will be on Saturday, March 29, from 2-4 pm, with added kids’ activities in the art garden.

This exhibition embraces the dichotomies found in motherhood: ideas of rest and productivity, contentment and overwhelm, stability and transition, responsibility and absurdity/play, and societal expectations vs. personal intuition. The pieces visually explore how one finds personal balance, or simply lets go of this elusive state, celebrating imbalance within life and art.

PLEASE HELP WITH PARKING IN THE CHURCH LOT: Several people currently have mobility issues and need to park in our small parking lot on Jefferson St. If you are able, please park elsewhere so that the marked and unmarked spaces can be used by those who need them. Thanks.

IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

April 6—Fifth Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday

April 13—Palm Sunday—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

April 17—Maundy Thursday—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae

April 18—Good Friday—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon

April 20—Easter Sunday—Breakfast in Rockwood Hall starting at 8:00 a.m.; Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.

DON’T GIVE UP FOR LENT—FIND STRENGTH: Members and friends are helping to shore up each other’s strength with contributions to this year’s Lenten Devotional. Reflections by Congregational UCC members and friends help us search together for strength in these days. If you are not receiving these daily reflections, please talk with Bill Lovin or call the church office.

The themes for each week are:

Finding Strength in the Wilderness

Finding Strength Out in the Open

Finding Strength in Uncertain Times

Finding Strength in Unfamiliar Territory

Finding Strength among Friends and Family

Finding Strength to Face Life and Death

SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING: If you notice something in the building that needs attention—a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office (319-337-4301) know right away. Thanks.

USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES: There are still some opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING? This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

WE LIVE STREAM OUR WORSHIP SERVICES AT 10:15 ON SUNDAY MORNING.

You can join us online in real time at <https://vimeo.com/event/1424751>. This streaming address is the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted after worship on Sunday at <https://vimeo.com/channels/1547852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.