



“Prodigal Son”—John August Swanson

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

WORSHIP FOR MARCH 30, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

PRELUDE “Supplication” Rudolf Dittrich

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

John Fieselmann, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

*CALL TO WORSHIP

As high as the stars are beyond the earth
so great is God’s love for all those who walk upon it.

**Let all places and all creatures praise God.
Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

* HYMN 272 “God of the Sparrow”

**God of the sparrow
God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise**

**God of the earthquake
God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save**

**God of the rainbow
God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks**

**God of the hungry
God of the sick
God of the prodigal
How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life**

**God of the neighbor
God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace**

**God of the ages
God near at hand
God of the loving heart
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home**

*OPENING PRAYER

Living God, we seek your presence now.

Our minds cannot understand you, yet our hearts rest in your love and compassion.

Our faith cannot grasp you, yet in you we live and move and have our being.

Our way ahead into this week is hidden from us, but we trust that we go through these days kept in your gracious care.

Open our eyes to see the simple glories of everyday things

and renew our vision of the goodness in which our day-to-day lives are lived.

Strengthen our relationships with other people.

**Help us to come to our senses so we may the know way ahead.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#223)

**O my soul, bless your Creator, all within me bless God's name.
Bless your Maker, and forget not all God's mercies to proclaim.**

**God forgives all our transgressions, all who suffer, gently heals;
God redeems us from destruction, and with us so kindly deals.**

**Bless your Maker, all you creatures, let your voices God extol.
All throughout God's vast creation, bless the Lord of all, my soul.**

ANTHEM "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled" Oley Speaks

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 "Adagio" John Alcock

*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 Joshua 5:10-12

PSALM 32

Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!

**Happy are they to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,

because of my groaning all day long.

**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and did not conceal my guilt.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."

Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble;
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.

**You are my hiding-place;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go;
I will guide you with my eye.

**Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding;
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will not stay near you."**

Great are the tribulations of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust in the Lord.

**Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord;
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 15:11-32

SERMON "Finding Strength in Unfamiliar Territory"

* HYMN (insert) "Lead on Eternal Sovereign"

**Lead on eternal Sovereign, we follow in your way;
Loud rings your cry for justice, your call for peace this day:
Through prayerful preparation, your grace will make us strong,
To carry on the struggle to triumph over wrong.**

**Lead on eternal Sovereign, we follow not with fear,
For in each human conflict your words of strength we hear:
That when we serve with gladness, you will not let us fall,
Our trust is in your promise that love will conquer all.**

**Lead on eternal Sovereign, till sin's fierce war shall cease,
And all your saints together will sing a hymn of peace;
Then all in your dominion will live with hearts set free,
To love and serve each other for all eternity.**

*BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE "Maestoso" Flor Peeters

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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

MONDAY

❖ Serving at Free Lunch Program	Noon
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TUESDAY

❖ Mission Board	7:00 pm
Board of Christian Education	7:00 pm
Stewardship Board (Zoom)	7:00 pm

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
Worship Service	10:15 am
Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall	After Worship
Choir Rehearsal	11:30 am
Bible Study	11:30 am
Youth Group	5:00 pm

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 is leading 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 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 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.

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. 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.