

Continuing a Progressive Tradition, 1977-1999

Rev. J. David Mallgren came from Davenport to serve as pastor in 1977. Church staff included Marilyn Peterson, secretary; Jackie Pritchard, choir director; and Mark Pritchard, organist.

One of the challenges facing the church involved institutional relationships. The American Baptists were no longer funding United Ministries in Higher Education, and the church wrestled with whether to continue to participate in that ecumenical campus ministry effort without denominational support. While encouraging the Iowa Baptist Convention to provide funding to UMHE, the church decided to continue as a partner in that ministry.

Another concern was the Ames Community Nursery School. The only such program in town when it was established in 1961, there were now a dozen or more similar preschools and day care centers, and the nursery school was facing financial challenges.

In 1979 the church participated in a cooperative Vacation Bible School with First Christian Church and United Church of Christ-Congregational. This pattern of cooperative ministry efforts continued through the era.

With concern over a long-term decline in membership, Rev. Mallgren made this report to the Long Range Planning Committee in 1982:

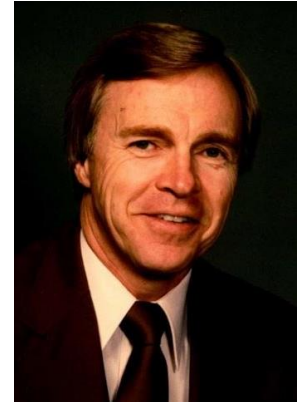
Members are getting older. There are more Baptist churches in our area. The population is shifting. Fundamentalism is increasing. There has been a change in the center of our lives. We now have more than one center. How can we reverse this trend to separate religion from the rest of our lives? ... Will the church be here in 25 years?

Rev. Mallgren's comments are interesting in that they could have been made any time over the last 50 years or so – and in many congregations.

In response to these trends, and with a desire to share the Good News, the church made efforts to increase visibility and outreach, using advertising campaigns and holding "Invite a Friend" Sundays. Family Nights with social activities for the church family were held, with enthusiastic response. The choir and music program continued to be a strong program of the church, and many members attended conferences at Green Lake Conference Center in Wisconsin.

Rev. Mallgren announced his resignation as pastor in 1985. He left the church to serve as a Field Minister for the region and later became Executive Minister for the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska. He retired in 1999 and he and Margo moved to Winterset, Iowa. He died in December 2016.

Rev. David Nethercott was called as pastor in 1986, coming from Valley View Baptist Church in Cedar Falls. David wrote a detailed recollection of his time in Ames, which is available [on our website](#). He noted that one of the first things that happened after he came to Ames was the closing of the nursery school. While this marked the end of an era, the church could be proud of its leadership and foresight in making care for children a priority in the community.



Rev. David Mallgren



David, Diane, Elisa, and Joel Nethercott

Some of the notable happenings of the late 80's-early 90's included the establishment of Care Circles that provided fellowship and support within the church, hiring a part-time Campus Ministry Coordinator and Children & Youth Coordinator, and improvements to the church facilities. This included renovation of the college/career room, renovation of the kitchen, remodeling of the children's area downstairs, and installation of an elevator lift.

Gayle Osterberg was hired as Office Manager in 1987. She served the church for 25 years and had a significant ministry beyond simply taking care of office tasks. Three pastors, two interim pastors, and countless church members, rental parkers,

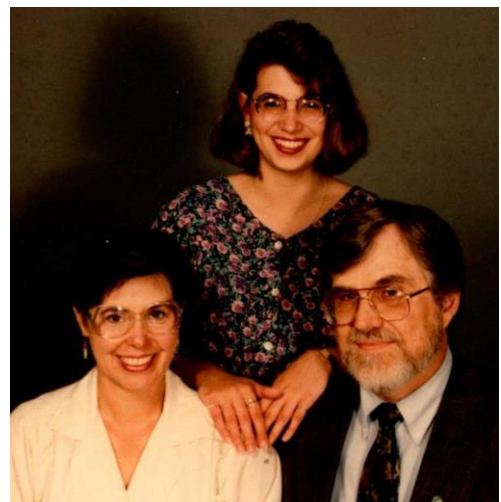
and church neighbors benefitted from her caring presence in the church office.

The global vision of the church continued. In 1988, the church began a sister church relationship with Shiloh Baptist Church in Los Sanchez, Nicaragua. This relationship continued for several years and church members were able to visit our sister church. Members of the church were active in the Baptist Peace Fellowship. Rev. Saboi Jum and his wife Nang Bawk joined our fellowship in 1990. He was a pastor and peacemaker from Myanmar and served as General Secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention.

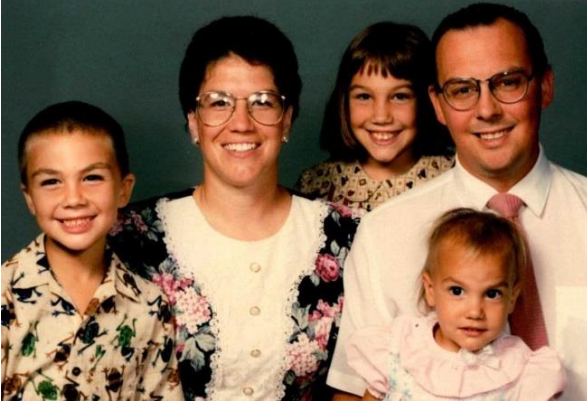
Ongoing conversations that began or continued through these years included the problematic nature of carrying the "Baptist" label, and whether a change of the church name might be in order; the limited life expectancy of the pipe organ and need for a new organ; and the difficulty of a church structure designed in a different era. The Nethercotts left Ames in 1991 as David took a position at First Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio. He later served a united ABC/Presbyterian congregation in New York State and is now retired in California.

Rev. James Boardman was called as pastor in 1992, coming to us from a church in the Buffalo, New York area. Almost from the very beginning of the church in downtown Ames, the pastor had lived in a church-owned parsonage. This changed with Rev. Boardman. While the house itself is more than adequate, the location in the campus area, surrounded by fraternity and sorority houses and apartments, is less than ideal for families. Prior to the Boardmans coming, the Covenant House next door had been housing the Center for Creative Justice. With the parsonage now vacated, CCJ moved into that space and the house at 304 Lynn was sold.

United Christian Campus Ministry, a later incarnation of UMHE, moved from Collegiate Presbyterian to First Baptist in 1993. The ministry was supported by the Presbyterians, Disciples, UCC, Baptists, and Mennonites. UCCM was



Jim, Keitha, and Shannon Boardman



*Revs. Joanne and Mark Jacobs,
Sam, Erin and Gretchen*

housed in our church until the ministry concluded in 2001.

The church sought to focus on growth and on deepening spiritual life. Workshops were held on topics including "Spirituality and Health." Task forces studied concerns including Human Sexuality, Long Range Planning, and Church Growth. Lenten Studies, a tradition for some years now, continued to be held.

In 1994, Rev. Joanne Jacobs was called as Christian Education Director. Rev. Jacobs led the Christian Education Committee in establishing a Child Care

policy and instituting background checks for all who work with children and youth. While numbers were less than in previous years, committed members led in ministry with children, youth, and college students.

In 1997, the Christian Education Board purchased a computer for \$2500. It included a 266 mhz processor, 32 MB of memory, and a 33.6 modem/fax. The computer was placed in the CE office for congregational use, and computer classes for church members were held. In 1998, Tom Logue was instrumental in establishing a church website.

In the summer of 1998, Jim Boardman resigned as pastor. Shortly after, Joanne Jacobs resigned as CE Director, as her husband Mark was taking a pastorate in Newton. Earl Hammond, deacon chair, served as acting moderator because that position was unfilled. It was a time of transition and uncertainty. After many years of slow attendance decline, there were real questions about the future.

During the interim, the church studied options for the future including selling the building and moving to a smaller facility, finding a partner congregation to share our relatively large building, and merging with another church. Some of the feedback the church received during this time was interesting; members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship said that they hoped we would continue in ministry because a Baptist church like ours was needed in Ames.

At a congregational meeting, after younger members expressed a desire to continue as a church at the current location, longtime member Bud Ewing said, "If the younger members are for it, then I'm supporting it," and after months of study, conversation, and prayer, the decision was made. It was decided to stay at 200 Lynn Avenue, to call a new pastor, understanding that the church would need to change the way it did things, and to make no other decisions about its future for at least three years. In the fall of 1999, the church called Rev. David Russell as its 25th pastor.