



The Spire

First Baptist Church, Ames, Iowa

Pastor's Word

Everything is different in 2020. Church, school, work, shopping, dining, healthcare, sports, entertainment, you name it. The pandemic has changed life considerably for all of us. I saw a neighbor this morning while we were both out walking our dogs. 'How are you?' I asked. 'I'm doing OK,' she said, 'but I am tired of staying home.'

We all feel that way. At our Virtual Coffee Shop on Tuesday, we were talking about how little we had driven our vehicles over these past months – we can go a couple of months or more between fill-ups. I was on vacation this past week, but it was not the usual vacation. We stayed home mostly, and I worked on a variety of projects. As I mentioned on Sunday, our big trip was to Marcy Township in Boone County, to the Sparks Cemetery. William Sparks, one of the early settlers in the area, is buried there, along with his wife Sarah, several children including son King David Sparks (actual name), and many descendants. He was a farmer-preacher, originally from North Carolina, who farmed and pastored in Indiana before moving west. He started the North Union Baptist Church, which was the first Baptist church in the area and at the time it was founded "probably the farthest northwest of any Baptist church on the continent," according to *Historical Sketches of Iowa Baptists*, written by Samuel Mitchell, the historian of the Iowa Baptist Convention (and first pastor of our church), and published in 1886.

August 2020

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
200 Lynn Ave.
Ames, IA 50014-7188
Worship Sundays 9:45 am

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First Baptist Church is an open and caring family of faith where worship is central and faith engages both heart and mind. We are warmly ecumenical, delight in our diversity, and cherish our Baptist heritage of freedom. We are called by Christ to share God's love with the campus, community, and the world.

As we seek to follow the way of Jesus, we welcome all people to fully participate in our fellowship: all ages, colors, backgrounds, political affiliations, and physical and mental abilities; male and female, gay and straight, rich and poor, single and married. We are all God's children, and all are welcome here.



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The North Union Church was about 5 or 6 miles south of Moingona (which is a few miles west and south of Boone, on the other side of the river). The church drew members from miles around and in time sent out members who started or helped start churches in Boone and Webster Counties including Great Bend, Mineral Ridge, Swede Point (a Swedish speaking church), Boonsboro, and Montana (which changed its name to Boone). Rev. Sparks preached regularly in some of these churches at various times and also started a church in Homer (north of Stratford) and was pastor there – all while serving as pastor at North Union and being a full-time farmer.

I had learned a bit about Rev. Sparks, who was called Father Sparks, while researching our church's early history. Mitchell wrote (in the 1880's), "Father Sparks was one of that class of numerous non-slaveholding whites who fled with their families from the blighting influence of chattelism to enjoy the free institutions of the North." That comment might say as much about Rev. Mitchell as it does Rev. Sparks, but it certainly speaks to Rev. Sparks' convictions.

Since reading about Father Sparks and these early churches, I had the idea of driving to visit these pioneer communities, but found that the churches and, for the most part, the communities are long gone. There is no trace of the North Union Church; from what I can tell of its location, there is nothing but a cornfield there. But the Sparks Cemetery is there, still in use, and a reminder of the earliest Baptist roots in this area. It is a beautiful little cemetery and it was a nice drive. And if not for the pandemic, I may not have visited. As I said, everything is different this year.

Blessings,
Dave



COVID-19 Update

Our Re-Opening Committee continues to meet. We have noted infection rates and trends, especially keeping an eye on Story County. We continue to work on details of what a return to in-person worship will look like. At this point, the committee and the deacons have agreed that it is prudent to wait until students return to Ames and monitor how that affects our community in regard to COVID-19. We hope to be able to have outdoor worship services this fall but until we feel safe in doing so we will continue with worship via Zoom (and we are thankful for that!). If you have questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Re-Opening Committee: Wes Johnson, Mindy Phomvisay, Elizabeth Stegemöller, Aaron Stegemöller, Joe Parrish, Moderator Jere Maddux, and Pastor Dave Russell.

A Note from Patricia Izbicki

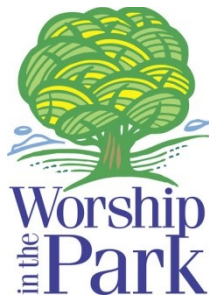
Patricia writes: *I am excited to share that I've received an offer from the University of Miami for a Project Manager position working on the [NIH All of Us grant](#). This is an incredible opportunity to impact the world through biomedical research on a truly grand scale. However, I am extremely sad to leave everyone at FBC. You all have been such an important presence in my life. I have learned so much from everyone spiritually and musically. Your support, care, and concern for my well-being will never be forgotten.*

July 26 was Patricia's last day with us. We are so thankful for her ministry with us and pray for God's blessings on her as she begins this new opportunity.

**Church Work Day
Saturday, August 1, 9 AM**



We have plenty of socially-distanced outdoor/yard projects including weeding, flower bed cleanup, trimming bushes, etc. We did not have our usual spring work day and we could use your help!



OK, it's not really in the park – not this year. But our annual service with First Christian Church and Ames UCC is definitely on! Please join us this Sunday, August 2 at 10 am (**note the time**). You can join the service via our regular Zoom link. We look forward to worshipping with friends from FCC and UCC. The service will include communion, so plan to have bread and juice (or similar) on hand.

Next Virtual Trivia Night August 28



Our next monthly Trivia Night will be on Friday, August 28 at 6:30 pm, via Zoom. The questions come from a range of general knowledge topics, with a few “churchy” questions thrown in. We will form teams, and the teams can discuss their answers to each round’s questions in Zoom breakout rooms. We will use the same Zoom link that we use on Sunday mornings. Contact Pastor Dave for more information.

August Anniversaries

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Buckley and Marilyn Peterson | 1 |
| Larry and Phyllis Schrag | 9 |
| Wayne and Irene Shireman | 16 |

August Birthdays

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Lorrie Whitaker | 7 |
| Scott Anderson | 13 |
| Gary Maydew | 13 |
| Jim Sassaman | 20 |
| Johnie Hammond | 22 |
| Gabe Whitaker | 22 |
| Bob Parrish | 24 |
| Randall O'Brien | 29 |

Dear Church Family,

We want to express our appreciation and gratitude for your presence and spirit in the celebration of our wedding. We especially thank Pastor Dave and Pastor Susan for such a meaningful ceremony; Mindy and Emma for the beautiful music; Barbara for the lovely flowers; Joe P. for his technical/camera wizardry; and Zoe Russell for her skills as house manager and “Zoom-meister”. We received an abundance of wonderful comments from folks representing 16 states who viewed the wedding. We cannot thank you all enough for the Christian love and encouragement you have nurtured us with as our relationship has grown and now progresses into truly sharing our lives together.

With love and blessings,
Beth Douglass and Jere Madd



THANK YOU for your continuing support of our church! You may mail checks to the church at 200 Lynn Ave. 50014 (attn.: Financial Sec.), give via online bill pay through your bank, or give via PayPal from our website at fbcames.org.



Join the **AMOS CCC Campaign** to reflect on lessons from history and the 1930s New Deal, share stories about the pressures facing our communities today, and build our capacity to create more just communities in the months and years to come.



First Baptist will hold a CCC Workshop on Sunday, August 23 at 11 am via Zoom, on our regular worship link. This will combine a learning component and a chance to share pressures we are feeling in our community. Everyone is welcome!

www.amosiowa.org

AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) is a growing broad-based organization of 39 faith and community organizations throughout Central Iowa. We seek to channel individual action into a responsible and powerful organized force for the common good.

AUGUST

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|-----------|--|--|--|
|  | | | | | | 1 9:00a Work Day  <i>Work Day</i> |
| 2 10:00a Worship with FCC, UCC  | 3 | 4 2:00p Virtual Coffee Shop 7:00p Re-Opening Committee | 5 | 6 6:30p Weekly Devotion | 7 | 8 |
| 9 9:45a Worship, Communion | 10 | 11 2:00p Virtual Coffee Shop 7:00p Trustees | 12 | 13 6:30p Weekly Devotion | 14 | 15  |
| 16 9:45a Worship | 17 ISU Classes Begin  | 18 2:00p Virtual Coffee Shop | 19 | 20 6:30p Weekly Devotion | 21 | 22 |
| 23 9:45a Worship 11a FBC AMOS CCC Workshop | 24 | 25 2:00p Virtual Coffee Shop | 26 | 27 6:30p Weekly Devotion Deacons 7:15 | 28  6:30p Virtual Trivia Night | 29  |
| 30 9:45a Worship | 31 | | | | | |

Racial Justice Resources and Action Ideas

Our church has been providing opportunities for learning, reflection, conversation, and action working toward racial justice. Our church librarian, Catherine Parrish, has done a wonderful job of ordering books for children, youth, and adults on issues of racism and injustice. Many of these titles were described in the [June Spire](#). A recent addition donated to our library is *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo.

Our Thursday night devotion group spent three weeks listening to and discussing portions of an interview with Ibram Kendi on how to be an anti-racist.



And then on July 19 we held a virtual forum in which we watched a conversation with Robert P. Jones at the BJC Annual Luncheon on “White Supremacy and American Christianity.” The conversation that followed was engaging, and we talked about what the next steps for our church might be. We decided to share resources and opportunities for action through the *Spire*. If you have resources to share, please pass them on and we will include in next month’s *Spire*.

The video we watched on Thursday evenings with Ibram Kendi is [The Difference between Being “Not Racist” and Anti-Racist](#).

Our July 19 forum and discussion was around the conversation with Robert P. Jones on [White Supremacy and American Christianity](#).

Jan Thompson found Fredrick Douglass’ Fourth of July speech [delivered by his descendants](#) to be very powerful.

Johnie Hammond suggested several simple action ideas. She encourages us to [contact Governor Reynolds](#) (phone 515-281-5211) and ask her to issue an executive order restoring voting rights to felons who have served their time, as she has pledged to do.

You can [contact Alabama Governor Kay Ivey](#) and encourage her to rename the Edmund Pettis Bridge in honor of John Lewis.

Organizations such as [The Innocence Project](#) and the [Equal Justice Institute](#) that work on justice for the innocent need support.

Locally, Johnie suggests asking the City Council to adopt a racial profiling data collection and analysis. This would determine whether racial profiling by the police is a serious problem in Ames.

Jean Hayes shared an excellent video - a [concise history of race in America](#) post-Civil War by Phil Vischer (creator of *VeggieTales*.) An article about the video appeared in *Christian Century*.

Jean also shared resources from her church in Minneapolis, Judson Memorial Baptist Church. While some of the links and suggestions are Minnesota or Twin Cities-specific, there is a lot of helpful information. [Click here](#) and scroll to bottom of the page to Resources from the Racial Justice Team.

The American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) will host a webinar, [“Faith and Activism: A Virtual Town Hall”](#) on August 19 at noon (Central Time). You can [register here](#) for the webinar.

First Baptist Church
200 Lynn Avenue
Ames, Iowa 50014-7188

Our Church Staff:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Rev. Dr. David Russell | Pastor |
| Mindy Phomvisay | Director of Music |
| Emma Phomvisay | Summer Music Associate |
| Hope Deets | Office Manager |
| Kathy Greiner | Custodian |