



Community UCC

We're worth our words

Welcoming Progressive Community

Vibrant Messengers of Hope



Champaign, Illinois

Ordinary 14, Year B

July 7, 2024

Thoughts before worship: *A Prayer for Shoring Up* by Mary Luti

*You surround us like the everlasting hills.
You build the storm-proof house on rock.
Sentries pace the ramparts of your love,
guardians with sharp eyes for trouble.
Even so, we wonder if we are safe.
We doubt you can be trusted
to shore up shaky lives.
Like careless feet on uneven ground,
hope slips out from under us,
and we lose heart.*

*O Rock of Ages,
take now the honest hands
we stretch to you in need.
Hoist us to your heart
and calm the frightened beating of our own.
Show us the deadbolts and the steel
that forever stand
between us and the soul's despairing—
your Word,
your Promise,
and your lovely Child.
In his strong name we pray. Amen.*

Prelude

Aaron Ames

Call to Worship

The steadfast love of God never ceases,

God's mercies never come to an end.

God's mercies are new every morning!

Great is God's faithfulness!

As one body, we worship you, O God, made known to us as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We welcome you to our service this morning. Celebrating the diversity of creation, Community United Church welcomes persons of any age, ability, race, gender identity, sexual orientation or life condition. May the Divine Presence become real to you through this time of worship. We hope you come back!

Note: *Our worship services are live streamed. If you prefer not to have the back of your head seen on the live stream worship please do not sit in the first seven pews on the left side (organ/piano) of the sanctuary.*

Note 2: *The congregation responds to the liturgy parts in **BOLD***

*Everyone is invited to stand in body or in spirit.

Invocation

Creative and Creating God, give us the eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand your Word, as it is found in these words of Scripture. Help us to locate life in stories both familiar and unfamiliar. Grant us insight both to guide and challenge us now, and in the days to come. Amen.

*Hymn

Great Is Your Faithfulness

NCH 423

Great is your faith-ful-ness, O God, Cre-a-tor, with you no shad-ow of turn-ing we see.
You do not change, your com-pas-sions they fail not; all of your good-ness for-ev-er will be.*

Refrain:

*Great is your faith-ful-ness! Great is your faith-ful-ness! Mom-ing by morn-ing new mer-cies I see;
All I have need-ed your hand has pro-vid-ed, Great is your faith-ful-ness, God, un-to me!*

*Sum-mer and win-ter, and spring-time and har-vest, sun, moon, and stars in their cours-es a-bove,
Join with all na-ture in man-i-fold wit-ness to your great faith-ful-ness, mer-cy, and love. Refrain:*

*Par-don for sin and a peace so en-dur-ing, your own dear pres-ence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for to-day and bright hope for to-mor-row, bless-ings all mine with ten thou-sand be-side. Refrain:*

Welcome, a Word About Worship, and an Opportunity to Check-In

Call to Confession

Our help is in the name of God, who made heaven and earth. God listens. God cares. God responds. Join me, as we pray together, saying:

Prayer of Confession

Steadfast God, we confess that we aren't always eager to do the "right thing." Standing up for what we believe comes with consequences that aren't always pleasant! We face ridicule, or worse, persecution. Sometimes, we risk our very lives or, at least, our livelihoods! Your love, however, never gives up on us. You seem to know our strength better than we, ourselves. Forgive us when we fail to listen to you, when we fail to follow in your way. Forgive us when we "sell out" to the highest bidder without giving a thought to the consequences. With hope and in silence, we pray... (Time of Silence)

Assurance of Grace

God's love and mercy never ends, but is new every morning. Great is God's faithfulness! Beloved, believe the Good News:

In Christ, we are forgiven and set free!

*Passing of the Peace

Children's Moment

Call to Prayer

After the sermon, we will offer up our joys and concerns. Your prayer requests will be offered aloud. Whether you are sitting here in the sanctuary, or worshipping with us remotely, you are invited to add your joys and concerns to the prayer list: go to community-ucc.org/pray (a Google Form), or scan the QR code found here or there are prayer cards on the table at the back of the Sanctuary that you may fill out and hand to the usher.



Prelude to Scripture

Whether we take what is written in the Bible as fact, metaphor, myth, or story, let us listen now for the meaning it might hold for us on this day.

Sacred Reading from the Original Testament

Daniel 3:1-9; 12-28

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, ⁴the herald proclaimed aloud, 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.' ⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸ Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jewish people. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'O king, live for ever!

¹²There are certain Jewish people whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up.'

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?'

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defence to you in this matter. ¹⁷If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.'

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times more than was customary, ²⁰and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. ²¹So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. ²²Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counsellors, 'Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?' They answered the king, 'True, O king.' ²⁵He replied, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.' ²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!' So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counsellors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.'

Postlude to Scripture

Together, let us say:

May the Spirit bless us with wisdom and wonder as we ponder the meaning of these words for our lives.

*Hymn

Don't Be Afraid

Songbook 10

*Don't be afraid, my love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid, my love is stronger, And I have promised, promised to be always near. Repeat*

Sermon

Faces of our Faith: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Silent Meditation

Moment of Witness: a Face of My Faith

Mara Smith

Joys and Concerns

Morning Prayer

Call to Offering

People of God, remember that living life with open hands is an outward expression of God's inner work. May we be people of open hands and not clenched fists as we offer our best to God.

You may give online at community-ucc.org by clicking donate, or give in person.

Generous God, we are grateful for your open hands towards us. Accept the gifts we offer today as we seek to follow in Christ's footsteps. As we give, may we receive joy in the giving, strength for the journey, and a renewed sense of your steadfast love and faithfulness. In Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.



Offertory

*Hymn

Be Not Afraid

Songbook 14

*You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.
You shall see the face of God and live.*

Refrain:

Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow Me, and I will give you rest.

*If you pass through raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown.
If you walk amid the burning flames you shall not be harmed.
If you stand before the pow'r of hell and death is at your side,
know that I am with you, through it all. Refrain*

*Blessed are your poor, for the Kingdom shall be theirs
Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.
And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of Me,
Blessed, blessed are you! Refrain*

Commissioning of the Community

***Benediction**

***Postlude**

Aaron Ames

Please join us in the Parlor for the after party.

Acknowledgements

Liturgy for “*Faces of our Faith*” series from A Sanctified Art from Ann Houlette, Pastor, Bethany UCC, Louisville, KY
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Morning Prayer written by Minister Emeritus, Rev. Connie Bandy

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Serving Today

Ministers: The Community of Community UCC
Presider and Preacher: Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser

Organist: Aaron Ames
Audio/Video: John Osborne, Elizabeth Shack, Roger Wade

Community United Church of Christ Staff

Pastor:

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser
leah@community-ucc.org

Director of Youth Ministries:

Rev. Nicole Havelka | nicole@ucccampusministry.org

Commissioned Minister of Congregational Health and Wellness Emeritus:

Linda Morgan | lindamorgan@sbcglobal.net

Faith Community Nurse

Johnalene Radek | johnalene.radek@carle.com

Minister Emeritus:

Rev. Connie Bandy | connie@community-ucc.org

Director of Music Ministries:

Kathy Lee | music@community-ucc.org

Organist: Aaron Ames, Organist

Office Manager:

Carla Rush | info@community-ucc.org

Your Ministry Team Leaders

Moderator: Julie McClure*

Past Moderator: Johnalene Radek*

Incoming Moderator: Susan Pawlicki*

Clerk: Jeff Radek*

Pastoral Relations Committee: Cara Finnegan

Personnel Committee: Stephen Kolderup

Community Building: Peg Wade*

- **Care Team:** Marilou Hinrichs

- **Prayer Shawls:** Elena Kasper

- **Meal Train:** Jennifer Robbennolt

- **Driver's Ministry:** Marilou Hinrichs

- **Healing Music Ministry:** Marilou Hinrichs

- **Card Ministry:** Peg Wade

- **Visitor's Ministry:** Marilou Hinrichs

- **Health and Wellness Team:**

- **Hospitality Team:** Rocio (Ro) Arroyave Jamison
and Dennis Jamison

Children & Family: Brin Schuler* and Kelly Tull

Finance: Roger Wade* (treasurer), David Willcox (financial secretary)

Identity: Keri Evans* and Ramona Oswald

Mission: Jeanne Ward* and Patty Gropp

Sound & Ethical Practices (SEP): Shane Brownfield*
and Sue Fristoe

- **Buildings & Grounds:** Tom Ward and Matthew Hart

- **Contracts & Insurance:** Andrew McClure

UCC Campus Ministry Liaison: Ilsa Kantola*

Worship: Mara Smith* and Sebastian Major

- **Sound Coordinator:** Roger Wade

*denotes Church Life Board Member

United Church Foundation (UCC Campus Ministry)

Director of Campus Ministry: Rev. Nicole Havelka | nicole@ucccampusministry.org
www.community-ucc.org/campus-ministry

Community United Church of Christ

805 S. Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois, 61820

Phone: (217) 344-5091 | Website: www.community-ucc.org | Email: info@community-ucc.org