



Community UCC

We're worth our words

Welcoming Progressive Community

Vibrant Messengers of Hope



Champaign, Illinois

Second Sunday in Lent, Year A

March 1, 2026

Thoughts before worship: "If God Lived Next Door" Rev. Sarah Speed.

If God lived next door,
 I'd drop off a loaf of bread.
 I'd use my mom's best recipe.
 I'd wrap it in parchment
 and ribbon
 and place it on the front
 stoop.
 If God lived next door,
 I'd leave a note with my
 phone number.
*Call anytime you need
 anything!*
I'm always happy to help!
 If God lived next door,
 I'd keep sugar on the shelf,
 just in case she needed a cup.
 I'd put a picnic table in the
 front yard

and begin taking my coffee
 there.
 Whenever God passed by
 with their gaggle of rescue
 dogs,
 I could say, *Want to sit for
 a moment? Want to rest
 your legs?*
 I'd keep a jar of dog treats and
 water by the mailbox
 and change my doormat to
 one that says:
All are welcome here.
 I'd invite God over for dinner.
 She'd bring bread and juice.
 I'd host a block party,
 so that everyone could
 meet her.

I'd start a community garden
 so that the kids could run
 between rows of squash
 and tomatoes
 while we adults put our
 hands in the dirt.
 We'd share stories while
 we weeded,
 and eat harvest meals at the
 end of the season.
 If God lived next door,
 I'd want to build something
 beautiful.
 Then again,
 who says she doesn't?

Prelude

Andrey Ivanov

*Call to Worship

Tell me something good!

God loves you more than you could imagine.

Tell me something good!

God loves *all* of creation more than you could imagine.

Tell me something good!

God's love meets us in this service of worship. We are not alone.

This is good news indeed!

Let us worship our compassionate God.

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.

Today's theme is, "The good news is...great love for God and neighbor." The question of the day is this — when have you experienced extravagant love? Find the pennant flags in your pew and write your answer, place in the offering plate.

***Invocation**

Let us pray,

Good news God, speak louder than the news updates. Speak louder than our mental distractions. Speak louder than our anger and louder than our fear. God, speak loudly to us today, because we long to hear your good news once more. With hope we pray, amen.

***Opening Hymn**

I Sing the Praise of Love Almighty

NCH 50

*I sing the praise of Love al-might-y, which shines re-vealed in Je-sus' face.
I of-fer up all that de-lights me, all mean de-sires, each fond em-brace,
Turn from my-self, in pure de-vo-tion, and ea-ger plunge in love's vast o-cean.
How lov-ing-kind you are, how gen-tle, how your heart reach-es af-ter mine!
My heart re-sponds in el-e-men-tal sym-pa-thy, beat-ing per-feet time.
This mu-tual love, this strong at-trac-tion, I know no oth-er sat-is-fac-tion.
Se-cure my heart and all my be-ing, in you, my Sav-ior, cru-ci-fied.
You gave your life to work my heal-ing, bleed-ing for me, you groaned and died.
Be-lov-ed Je-sus, my sal-va-tion, you have, through love, re-stored cre-a-tion.
May my heart bear the deep im-pres-sion of love that Je-sus shares with me,
My life be-come a pure ex-pres-sion of all that Chris-tian love can be:
Each word, each act, a bright re-flec-tion of joy in Love's own res-ur-rec-tion.*

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

Introit

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah

Call to Confession

Beloved, we long to love others as God loves us, but that work is easier said than done. We lose our way. We become distracted. We grow fearful. We *need* God's grace.

Fortunately for us, God's grace is freely and abundantly given. So join me in the Prayer of Confession. Join me in being transformed.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,

Did we see you hungry and give you something to eat? Did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink? Did we see you alone and offer you compassion?

Or did we cross the street? Did we avert our eyes? Did we come up with every excuse in the book?

God, we long to be people who love our neighbors with the same overwhelming love that you have for them. But we must admit, we have a long way to go.

Forgive us for the times when we let bias, scarcity, or fear get in the way of love. Wash us clean and give us the courage to try again. With hope for a better tomorrow we pray, amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Even when we act with judgment, even when we are guided by fear, even when we turn our back on a neighbor in need, God does not turn God's back on us. So join me in this good-news declaration:

We are seen. We are forgiven. We are invited to try again. Thanks be to God for this unending love.

***Passing the Peace**

Children's Moment

Anthem

Hush! Somebody's Callin' My Name

CUCC Choir

Hush, hush, Somebody's callin' my name.

Oh, my Lord, what shall I do?

I'm so glad that trouble don't last always.

I'm so glad I got my religion in time. Hallelujah, Lord!

Soon one mornin' death come creepin' in my room.

Call to Prayer

community-ucc.org/pray



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 Gospels

Matthew 25:35-40

³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

Sacred Reading from the Gospels

Luke 7:36-50

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and when he went into the Pharisee's house he reclined to dine. ³⁷And a woman in the city who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." ⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little." ⁴⁸Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

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

They Asked, "Who's My Neighbor"

NCH 541

They asked, "Who's my neigh-bor and whom should I love; for whom should I do a good deed?"

Then Je-sus re-lat-ed a sto-ry and said, "It's an-y-one who has a need, yes, an-y-one who has a need."

*There once was a trav-el-er set on by thieves who beat him and left him to die;
A priest and a Le-vite each saw him in pain; but they turned a-way and walked by, yes,
they turned a-way and walked by.*

*A cer-tain Sa-mar-i-tan then came a-long to bind up his wounds and give aid;
He took him to stay at an inn un-til well, and for all the ser-vice he paid, yes, for all the ser-vice he paid.*

*I know who's my neigh-bor and whom I should love, for whom I should do a good deed;
For Je-sus made clear in the sto-ry he told, it's an-y-one who has a need, yes, an-y-one who has a need.*

Message *The Good News Is Great Love for God and Neighbor*

Silent Meditation

Community Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer Response *Hold On*

Call to Offering
community-ucc.org/

Offertory *Hostias from Requiem*

Xiaoyi Zha

*Hostias et preces Tibi
Domine Laudis offerimus
ta suscipe pro animabus illis
quarum hodie memoriam facimus,
fac eas Domine
de morte transire ad vitam
quam olim Abrahae promisisti
et semini ejus.*

*Sacrifice and prayer to you
Lord in praise we offer
receive them for the souls
who this day we remember,
grant oh Lord
that they from death pass to life
as it was to Abraham promised
and to his seed.*

Commissioning of the Community

***Sending Hymn** *Standing at the Future's Threshold*

NCH 538 v. 1-4

*Stand-ing at the fu-ture's thresh-old, grate-ful for God's guid-ing hand,
Ask-ing no pro-tect-ed strong-hold, called to be a pil-grim band,
Seek-ing ev-er for new vi-sion of the gos-pel for our day,
We move for-ward in God's mis-sion with our faith to show the way.*

*Midst the teem-ing cit-ies' mil-lions, wit-ness to God's bound-less love,
Reach-ing for each sys-tem's lost ones, seek-ing jus-tice with each move;
Grant us cour-age, strength, and pa-tience to con-tend with vi-cious power,
Lead us for-ward in the faith that gives us hope in test-ing's hour.*

*O-pen-heart-ed in ex-chang-es with the faith-ful not our own,
Trust-ing God's way with these strang-ers not to leave the truth un-known,
Join-ing them in shared en-deav-or where we have Christ's clear com-mand,
We have faith that calls us ev-er toward this good earth's prom-ised land.*

*Build-ing jus-tice as the bul-wark of the peace that God would give,
Mak-ing sac-ri-fice the hall-mark of the life we're called to live:
Grant us, God, to bear our wit-ness to this peace in Christ, and move
For-ward with our faith's own ac-cess to the life of hope and love.*

***Benediction**

As you go from this place
meet anger with love,
fear with hope,
pain with gentleness.

Speak the Good News
of love for all,
peace that surpasses our understanding,
and good news that
rolls down like water.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

***Benediction Response**

Ain'-a That Good News

CUCC Choir

Postlude

Andrey Ivanov

Please join us in the Parlor for the after party.

Acknowledgements

Liturgy from asanctifiedart.org Tell Me Something Good Lenten Series written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Introit, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," Spiritual arr. Nolan Williams Jr.

Anthem, "Hush! Somebody's Callin' My Name," Spiritual arr. Brazeal W. Dennard

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Prayer Response, "Hold On," Heidi Ann Wilson, used by composer's permission

Offertory, "Hostias from Requiem," Gabriel Fauré

Benediction Response, "Ain' -a That Good News," Spiritual arr. Robert Fryson

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Serving Today

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Your Ministry Team Leaders

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*denotes Church Life Board Member

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