

**This is August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020...the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

It is the last Sunday of Summer! Welcome to this time of Worship!

It is our mission at Community United Church of Christ in Medford, WI,  
to serve, to pray, to love, and to hold true to these words:

“No matter who you are or where you are on your life’s journey, you are welcome here!”

Let us pause and say a little prayer for all whom we have welcomed into this virtual space this summer;  
for all who have welcomed us into their outdoor spaces  
or their places of business during these days of summer.

Let us pray: Creator God, you know us each by name and you know our needs, our hopes and our dreams  
even better than we do. You have given us the days of our lives and these warm days of summer and have  
enfolded us in safe places. We ask your blessings on all those around us in this church family, these families  
of our birth and of our adoption, these friends... in every “bubble” and circle.

We give you thanks for our wellness and our safety.

You, O God, know our brothers and sisters around Wisconsin and across the nation and in every global  
location, whose needs are not only of health, but, of food and shelter, of safety from the ravages of wide-  
spreading fires, unstoppable hurricanes, unbearable temperatures and national violence.

We ask that the power of your love will continue to surround those who have lost all hope,  
as their homes and their lives have changed in a flash of flame, and a gust of storm  
and a burst of gunfire; those who are trapped in collapsed buildings, in closed minds and in the hatefulness  
of racism. Only your mighty hand can wipe away our tears and our anxiety  
and allow hope to arrive amidst these strange and still, always blessed days.

Help us to sort out the good from the bad and savor each “God-moment”  
as we give thanks for this day. Amen.

Let us sing or read together the words of the hymn, “Holy Ground” (Hymnal #654)

**We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around.**

**Let us praise Jesus now; we are standing in his presence on Holy Ground.**

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**Today’s scripture** is taken from the Book of **Exodus 3:1-15**,

The Message interpretation of the Bible.

<sup>1-2</sup> Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock  
to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of GOD appeared  
to him in flames of fire, blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked.

The bush was blazing away but it didn’t burn up.

<sup>3</sup> Moses said, “What’s going on here? I can’t believe this! Amazing! Why doesn’t the bush burn up?”

<sup>4</sup> GOD saw that he had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, “Moses! Moses!”  
Moses said, “Yes? I’m right here!”

<sup>5</sup> God said, “Don’t come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet.

**You’re standing on holy ground.”** <sup>6</sup> Then God said, “I am the God of your father:

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God.

<sup>7-8</sup> GOD said, “I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries  
for deliverance from their slave masters; **I know all about their pain.** And now I have come down to help  
them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land  
with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite,  
the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

<sup>9-10</sup> “The Israelite **cry for help has come to me**, and I’ve seen for myself how cruelly they’re being treated  
by the Egyptians. It’s time for you to go back: I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people,

the People of Israel, out of Egypt.”

<sup>11</sup> Moses answered God, “**But why me?** What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

<sup>12</sup> “**I’ll be with you,**” God said. “And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain.”

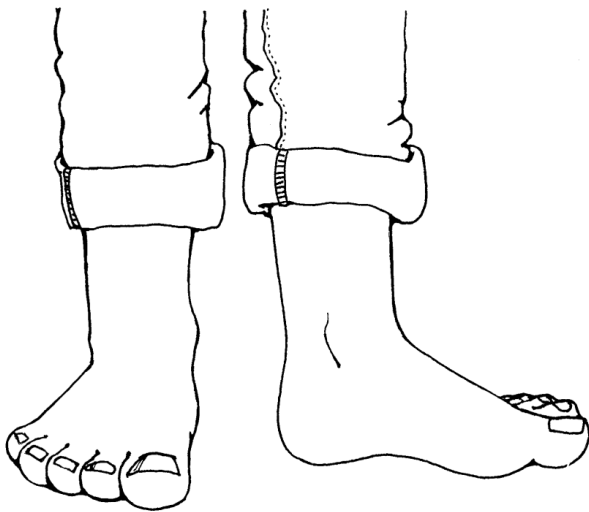
<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, ‘The God of your fathers sent me to you’; and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What do I tell them?”

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, ‘I-AM sent me to you.’”

<sup>15</sup> God continued with Moses: “This is what you’re to say to the Israelites: ‘GOD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob sent me to you.’ This has always been my name, and this is how I always will be known.”

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**The title of my message today is: “Barefoot and Blessed”**



Pray with me: Loving Creator, thank you for this holy ground beneath our feet. Thank you for your every call, even if all we have ever answered is, “Why me?” Amen.

Do you believe that God speaks to **us**?

Our denomination, the United Church of Christ, is a church shaped by scripture, traditions and the teachings of the generations that have come before us. Our church encourages us to be faithful followers of Jesus. Our God, the great “I Am,” is the ONE who speaks to us through the words and actions of those around us, in the thunder, in the stillness and the beauty of nature...in dreams... in those things that we formerly called “coincidences” and in the written words of scripture. This is what we believe. So, when God speaks, don’t keep it to yourself.

Tell someone! Often times, people will admit to me that they think God has spoken to them. They are hesitant to admit it. A few years ago, when I was getting my hair cut, the stylist, my husband’s niece, told me about something that happened to her shortly after her best friend had passed away. “You are going to think I am crazy,” she said, and went on to tell me how much she missed Jessie and how depressed she was and how she just couldn’t snap out of it. Then, she shared how a few *strange things* had happened to her. The stove timer, which had never worked before, started going off randomly, a couple times a day and, an old wind-up clock would alarm, without anyone touching it. “You’re not crazy at all,” I told her and then, I suggested that it could have been God telling her that Jessie was ok now and that it was time for her to “live” again, to smile again.

My son, Nate, who had survived massive blood clots in his lungs and leukemia in the year 2000, once asked me why God doesn’t speak to us like God spoke to Moses in the burning bush? I may have told you this story before, but, here it is again. I told Nate that I thought that God, for sure, had spoken to him when his diagnosis was marked, “in remission.” God had spoken clearly, “You have something yet to do here.”

When I look back in my life’s story, I believe that God has spoken to me many times: when I applied for a series of jobs that were offered to other people and not me; when marriages failed and my beloved husband and two of my children passed away; and each of the many times when things were not turning out the way I had planned. I have survived loss and fear and grief and anger, but, always found on the other side, that something good came along. Something unexpected. Something very settling. Has that ever happened to you? I’ll tell you this, my friends, that was God speaking to you!

In 2004, the United Church of Christ came up with a campaign called “God is Still Speaking.” It reminded us then as it reminds us today that God still has a lot more to say. Since then, *Stillspeaking* has worked with thousands of UCC congregations and individuals across this country to make religion relevant again and to extend an extravagant welcome to all—**because no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.** And now you know where those words originated!

In 2004, it was concluded that there was a real need for the United Church of Christ to spread its message of extravagant welcome, re-shape our understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ and to let it be known that we are a church where all are “welcomed in” just as they are. It was at this time also when the “comma logo” was initiated. The UCC borrowed the words of Gracie Allen, George Burn’s wife, who, as *she* was living with cancer, wrote him this note: **“Never place a period where God has placed a comma,”**

I have been thinking about that lately and am convinced that God is truly up to something in these pandemic days and has once again placed a comma in all of our lives, right here and right now!

You know, I think that Moses never would have imagined, in his wildest dreams, that people in the future... 1000’s of years in the future... would be reading his story and learning from it and seeing a parallel in their lives! He learned, first-hand, how loving and inclusive God is. He experienced God’s reaching out and helping him and the Israelites as they traveled from Egypt to a better place. He found that God never abandoned them, gave them water in the desert, and manna in the wilderness. God showed them that there was something, a promised land ahead of them.

This is our story, too. There is a lesson here and it is not complicated.

We, too, **are standing on holy ground.** What holy ground? Wherever you find your feet planted these days.

We, too, need to be more aware that when God speaks, and when any of those God-moments come along, we can go ahead and say **“Why me?”** ...but, know that God has a plan and our question will be answered.

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; the God of our fathers and mothers, the God of our grandfathers and grandmothers, the God of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa, and the God of every person who has ever stood upon this holy ground...OUR God, has is sending us, too, to accomplish more than we could ever imagine.

This same **God has heard our cries and knows our pain**...and is already working in our midst.

This same **God is here** to help us and always will be right here where we are... ready to listen and IS always speaking.

Now, stand if you can, take off your shoes and socks and look down at your bare feet and look at the holy ground where you are. Then, go into this day...even if it is just across the room...knowing that you are blessed and beloved and called to do some good in God’s holy name.

Let’s spend a few moments in silence, listening for God’s whisper.

**Take a deep breath and savor this clean air. Breathe it out now.**

Almighty and most gracious God, whose very nature is to be present in both good times and bad, in these windy, fiery, blustery, sunny days of our lives; in laughter and in pain, in joy and despair, in work and in play, let our hearts and minds be open to the reality of your presence with us.

Calm and settle us good and gracious God.

We lift to you the all who will be starting school this week and those who have already begun. Gracious God, bless the children in the paths you would have them follow ...keep them safe from harm and illness and let them have kind and caring friends to stand beside them. Let their campuses be safe.

We lift to you all those with health concerns. Merciful God, let those who seek shelter, find it; let those who are looking for work, find it; let those who are hungry be given the food that they need; let those who are hurting, both physically and mentally, find comfort. Hear now the joys and concerns that we hold in our hearts... Help us to listen more closely to what you have to say to us this and every day!

We pray in the name and in the words of Jesus, **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 sins,*  
as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into  
temptation, but, deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and  
the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

**This is our time of Offering.**

I invite you now to think about what you have to offer as you read or listen  
to these words of Paul in his letter to the **Ephesians, 3: 20-21**

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest  
dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within  
us. Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down all the generations!  
Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

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We each, as members and friends of this church family have made a commitment to be faithful  
to our church and faithful to our calling as we follow Jesus.  
Thank you, for each gift that you have given.

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
praise God all creatures here below,  
praise God above ye heavenly host,  
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen**

**Benediction:** Go now, but don't think, "Yes, in the future, I ought to..." Instead, do it. Do good now.  
~D365, 8-26-2020 Wade Griffith

This time of worship has ended, let our service continue...and as you do, be safe. Be well.

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Visit our webpage: [uccmedford.org](http://uccmedford.org) For video-recorded Worship, click on "media"

"Like" us on Facebook: Community United Church of Christ, Medford, WI

Listen to "Holy Ground" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdminhRbHvE>