

A Palpable Sense of God's Presence

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Earth Care and Spirituality

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In July of 1977, my late wife Ruth and I were rowing our wooden skiff from Louds Island to the mainland at Round Pond Harbor. At the time I was serving three small churches - in New Harbor, in Round Pond, and on Louds Island.

We had just finished the Sunday evening service on Louds Island, and were rowing the one-mile distance back across Muscongus Bay to the mainland.

Midway across the bay, we suddenly saw, to our horror, that Louds Island was ablaze! The entire east side of the island was aglow from the perceived flames. Without hesitation, we turned our craft around to return to help the islanders fight the fire.

As we desperately rowed, we suddenly were overwhelmed to discover, to our utter amazement, that the "flames" we envisioned, were in reality the rising of a spectacular summer full moon radiating crimson across the sky!

A profound peace descended upon us as we shipped our oars and sat in quiet in our small boat, viewing God's gift of remarkable splendor.

The image of that summer evening moonrise remains with me 44 years later.

It is a vision I will not forget.

For when we turn our lives toward the flames of life, whether these be the fires of injustice, racism, or inhumanity, I am reminded of another fire, this one sacred, the assuring radiance of God's abiding presence and profound peace.

Rev. Robert E. Ives and his wife, Phyllis, are members of the Newcastle UCC Church. He is retired from parish ministry, from serving as Chaplain at Bowdoin College, and from serving as Director of the Carpenters Boat Shop ministry which he and his late wife Ruth founded in 1974. Robert's passion for ministry of social justice finds him on any given day out and about in the community, volunteering to serve people of coastal Maine who struggle economically, and in other ways.