

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

*Affiliated with the United Church of Christ and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*



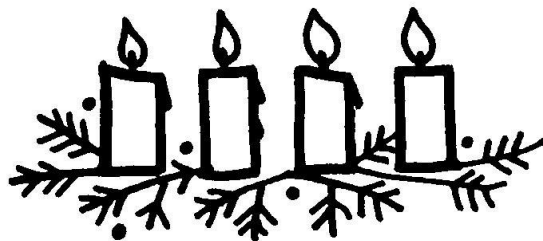
## **The Third Sunday of Advent**

**December 11, 2022**

**11:00 AM**

## The Third Sunday of Advent

The new church year is upon us! We begin with Advent, which means “to wait.” It is a four-week season of remembering our ‘waiting on Christ’ to come into the world—in his birth and in his glory. This year we are focusing our Advent worship on the stories of those people and heavenly beings who prepared the way for Christ to come: the family of John the Baptist, Angels, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joseph the husband of Mary, and all others who bore witness to the coming of Christ two thousand years ago. Together, let us once again prepare the way for Christ into our hearts!



### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 7:10-17

Psalm 37

Matthew 1:18-25



### **Advent III:**

## **Joseph: A Step of Faith**

### Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty, Senior Pastor

Pastor Joy Johnson, Associate Minister

*Whoever you are, and wherever you  
are on life's journey, you are  
welcome here!*

Prelude  
Special Music by

Cheryl Strecker  
Dina Johnson

Welcome & Announcements  
Centering Music

Invocation

One: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God our Creator, Christ the long-awaited Messiah, and the Holy Spirit, our eternal Advocate and friend.

**All: And also with you.**

One: Holy and loving God, the prophets foretold that your Spirit would be poured out on all people—such that both young and old would dream dreams and have visions.

**All: Where you give the gift of dreams and visions, you provide pathways of faith and flourishing. You do so for the sake of loving kindness and the healing of creation. In this hour of worship, we ask for the gifts of your Spirit, O God—so that just like the prophets, and the Holy Family themselves, we would learn to always trust in you. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” #182 Vv. 1-2

O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Chorus:

*O Come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!  
*(Chorus)*

**\*Opening Prayer**

**\*Sign of Peace**

One: The peace of Christ be with all of you.

**All: And also with you.**

One: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

*(You may choose to shake hands, hug, or simply acknowledge one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)*

## Advent Candles

One: People of God, how often do we feel as if life is stumbling in dark woods where the path is unclear? In times like these, we sometimes seek signs from heaven to guide our way.

**All: God, you call us to live by faith—and we never seek to test you—but we often need your guidance. In our need, we cry out, “God, show us the way!”**

One: The good news is this: God sometimes *does* give us signs in most unexpected ways. God manifests in surprises.

**All: On this third Sunday of Advent, we light our candles remembering the surprising ways of God. The surprise of the birth of Jesus through Mary—and today, we especially honor the surprise of angelic messages to Joseph, and the faith that it gave him. Like Joseph, may we also be willing to go where God calls us. Amen.**

Advent Song

“Wait for the Lord”

#166

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!  
*(Sing 3x)*

## **First Reading**

## **The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 7:10-17**

<sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to [king] Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. <sup>17</sup> The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

## **Responsorial**

## **Psalm 37**

One: Trust in the LORD and do good... take delight in the LORD, and God will give you the desires of your heart.

**All: Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for God; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.**

One: Our steps are made firm by the LORD when God delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the LORD holds us by the hand.

**All: The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak justice. The law of God is in their hearts; their steps do not slip. Amen!**

**\*Doxology**

**“Glory Be to God, Creator” #145**

Glory be to God, Creator, glory be to God the Son,  
Glory be to God the Spirit, known as Three, yet God the One

As it was in the beginning, it is now and so shall be,  
In a world without an ending, glory through eternity.

Holy, holy God Almighty! Holy, holy Prince of Peace!  
Holy, holy Wind of Presence! Holy, holy, holy! Amen!



**\*Gospel**

**Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

**One:** This the Gospel of Christ for the people of God.

**All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!**

O Come, O come, Emmanuel—and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Chorus:

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

O Come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.  
*(Chorus)*

O come, thou Wisdom from on high—and order all things, far and nigh;  
To us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.  
*(Chorus)*

O come, Desire of nations, bind—all peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
*(Chorus)*



**Communion**

Pastor: People of God, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

**All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Into Bethlehem we believe God manifested in humanity, through Christ Jesus, to be our living bread.**

Pastor: In our time, and in our place, the celebration of Christ's birth happens in the cold and darkness of winter.

**All: The darkness requires us to seek out light, to see where we are going. The cold requires us to seek warmth for our very lives. Scripture and season both point to our need for communion with the One who can be our light, our warmth, and our food for life.**

Pastor: And so, here at this Table we take bread and cup, and we ask the Holy Spirit to make it for us, communion with Christ who gave his life as the bread of heaven and as the cup of eternal life—and as the One who is the light in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome.

**All: Here at this Table we remember that Christ was born into the world to be an outpouring of God's Love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.**

Pastor: Beloved of God, come to the Table and receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Life.

## **Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer ("Debts and Debtors")**

One: The Lord be with you!

**All: And also with you!**

One: Let us pray: For the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether joys or sorrows...*[prayer requests are presented]*...Holy and loving God, in your wisdom, meet all of these needs in the perfect way of your grace.

**All: God, hear our prayer!**

One: That we, like Joseph, would choose to walk in faith, defined by the ways of love.

**All: God hear our prayer!**

One: For those that need a guiding spirit and inspiring dreams to lead them in the paths of their life.

**All: God hear our prayer!**

One: For all that we hold in the silence of our hearts, we come to you in the confidence of quiet, O God, and lift our petitions privately to you. *(Silent prayer)*... Almighty God, Sovereign of Heaven, shower your blessings upon all people! Move the mountains in our lives, or help to move us so that we might be fully at peace. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray...

**All: "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 debts as we forgive our debtors—and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever." Amen.**

## **Offering**

*Our offerings are first and foremost what we give to the world through justice, kindness, and mercy—and these we can do every day. Our offerings can also take the form of financial contributions to the church to support our ministries.*

**If you are not in the sanctuary, online donations can be made at:**

[www.communityunited.church/donate/](http://www.communityunited.church/donate/)

*Or, if you prefer to mail in a check, that can be addressed to the church at:*

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music and Time for Contemplation

Cheryl Strecker

*Your offerings make this inclusive ministry possible. Thank you! Because of you, our church reaches through and beyond Erie: providing worship, community, and service. As you can give generously, it is well received.*

**Offertory Prayer of Thanks**

\*Congregational Response #147

*“Praise God, from whom all blessing flow:  
Praise God, all creatures high and low: Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, in Jesus fully known!  
Creator, Word, and Spirit one!  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!”*



\*Departing Prayer

One: Holy and loving God, keep our hearts and minds open to the unexpected ways you show up in our lives, and like Joseph, help us to trust in you—even when the way of your will challenges convention.

**All: With Mary and Joseph, help us to remember that true religion is the path of love. And when we are in moments of need, remind us that the life of faith leads from humble states, like the manger of Bethlehem, to the glories of heaven. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn                      “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” #191

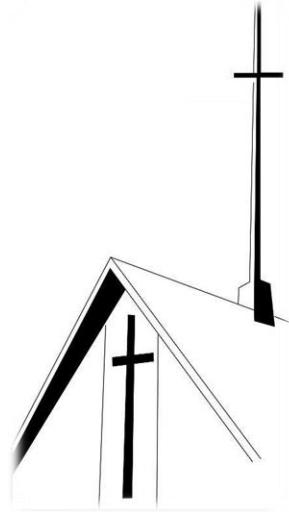
It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King”  
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,  
And ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,  
When, with the ever circling years, shall come the time foretold,  
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
And all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.



**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at  
Community United Church!**



**Next Sunday, December 11, 2022:**  
**11:00 AM**

**The Fourth Week of Advent:**

Revelation 12:1-9, 13-17

Proverbs 1:20-33

Luke 1:39-56

Theme: *The Wisdom and Prophecy of Mary*  
&

**Service Sunday 12:00 PM**

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect  
with a small group or church ministry?***

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

[www.communityunited.church](http://www.communityunited.church)



## Community United Church

**THE ALTAR FLOWERS THIS MORNING ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**

Today: Holiday Cheer and The Angel Tree Ministry  
Monday: Church Council 6:30  
Tuesday: Liberty House Dinner  
Wednesday: Spirits and Spirituality 7 PM (at the church)  
Next Sunday: Sunday School 9:45, Worship 11 AM and Service Sunday to follow

### **WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:**

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army), Shelby Wescott (Army), Mathew Anderson (Army) and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

### **PRAYERS FOR:**

Rod and Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer, Julie Davis, Diane Walker, George Churley, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, Sharon Cooper, Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre and Laura Stone

### **Council Members:**

***Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Ginnie Burger (Treas.), Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall***