

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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

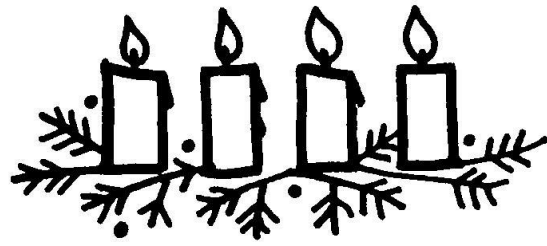


The Second Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2022

11:00 AM

The Second Sunday of Advent



Today's Readings:

Hebrews 1:1-14

Psalm 148

Luke 2:8-14



Advent II:

The Ministry of Angels

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!*

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!

Prelude
Special Music by

Cheryl Strecker
Pastor Rich McCarty

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, only you can fully satisfy our hearts—only you are our All-in-All. And yet, in the mystery of your wisdom, you choose to meet us through a multitude of channels. Of the many ways you meet us, you choose to reveal yourself through scripture and sacrament; in song, contemplation, and prayer. You also come to us through angels, your ministering spirits of heaven.

All: All around us, today, we share sacred space with angels who look on to see the story of salvation play out in our lives. We meet your angels in the faces of strangers whom we serve and love. We benefit from the ministry of angels in their guarding and guiding—which they do to lead us closer to you, O God. And with the angels we celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus, born of Bethlehem. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “Angels We Have Heard on High” #188

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.

Chorus:

Glo—ria in excelsis Deo!

Glo—ria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say, what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song? *(Chorus)*

Come to Bethlehem and see, him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee—Christ the Lord, the newborn King. *(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, we believe that God is everywhere and in all places—that heaven and earth, and all of creation, have their being in God. And yet, sometimes God feels distant. The *ever-present-One* sometimes feels elusive, and we can slip into dark nights of the soul.

All: Let us remind one another: God is always with us, even when our feelings cannot perceive it. God is always with us, we are never alone.

One: In the story of humanity, God sometimes comes to us through the presence of angels—spirits of heaven who have been charged by God to tend to us, to challenge us, to guard us, and to guide us onto new paths.

All: On this second Sunday of Advent, we light our candles remembering the ministry of angels. We celebrate that angels announced the coming of Christ. They brought new truth to Mary and Joseph. They sang at the birth of Christ; and they minister to us yet today—sometimes in ways unseen. 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 New Testament Letter to the Hebrews 1:1-14

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” ⁷ Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire.” ⁸ But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” ¹⁰ And, “In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; ¹² like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.” ¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? ¹⁴ Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Responsorial

Psalm 148

One: Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise God in the heights!

All: Praise God, all you angels of God; praise God, all heavenly host.

One: Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together!

All: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for God's name alone is exalted; God's glory is above earth and heaven. Praise the LORD! 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

Luke 2:8-14

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!*"

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Song of Response “Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn” #160

Awake! Awake and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born—behold! The Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
He opens wide the heavenly door and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing,
His humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing;
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving-kindness,
The thunder of his anthems roll to shatter all hatred and blindness.

In darkest night his coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,
As morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in wonder,
The weak be raised above the strong, and weapons be broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, through dark the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our endless story;
May God fill every day we share and bring us at last into glory.

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: For all those who need the inspiration and guidance of heaven, may Spirit send them angels to minister.

All: God hear our prayer!

One: That our spiritual eyes would be opened to the mysterious realm of Spirit around us—and may that sight remove our despair.

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/

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

1011 West 38th 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, Creator of all that is seen and unseen. You send your unseen angels to us, and we praise and thank you for their gifts of grace, inspiration, and guidance.

All: May our gratitude for your angels never outshine our devotion and love of you, O God. And may we never give up hope—believing that you still meet us with the host of heaven. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates” #176

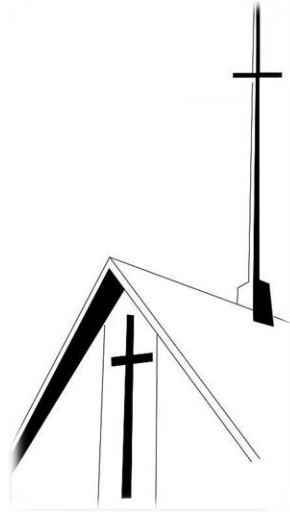
Lift up your heads, O mighty gates: behold the King of glory waits!
The King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart: make it a temple set apart—
From earthly use for heaven’s employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer come! I open wide my heart to you: here, Lord, abide!
Let me your inner presence feel: your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign, enter in! Let new and nobler life begin!
Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

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



Next Sunday, December 11, 2022:

11:00 AM

The Third Week of Advent:

Isaiah 7:10-17

Psalm 37

Matthew 1:18-25

Theme: *Joseph: A Step of Faith*

7th Annual Holiday Cheer & Angel Tree Ministry

12:15 PM

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

www.communityunited.church



Community United Church

**THE ALTAR FLOWERS THIS MORNING ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN
MEMORY OF WALTER "BUCKY" RODGERS FROM CAROL RODGERS**

Today: Last Day for Poinsettia Sign-ups
Wednesday: RESONATE: Songs of the Season
Next Sunday: Sunday School 9:45, Worship 11 AM, Holiday Cheer and The Angel Tree
Ministry

If you would like to make soup for Holiday Cheer, the sign-up sheet is in Fellowship Hall

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 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***