

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Affiliated with the United Church of Christ & the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



July 2, 2023

Summer Sermon Series:

Renewal and Reform *is* the Path of Faith

Part 1: The Prophetic Turn of Religion

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Litany for Independence Day

One: People of God, as citizens of the Reign of God, we find ourselves a pilgrim people on earth. The scriptures teach us to live peacefully wherever we are.

All: As our country prepares to celebrate Independence Day, we honor every good thing that has come from the civil mission to create liberty and justice for all.

One: We also pause in humility, and we repent, for times past—and present—when oppression and injustice have been perpetuated.

All: As we hear the call to mend our every flaw, we dare to rise in the cause of common liberty. We do this so that all people may be free. And we rise in the cause of liberty to create a more perfect Union: for our time, for our children, for the future, and for the sake of a peace we might attain throughout the world. Amen.

*Song for the Nation “We Praise You, O God” #726

We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring;
We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
We bless your holy name: glad praises we sing.

We worship you, God of our fathers and mothers;
Through life's storm and tempest our guide you have been;
When perils o'er take us, you never forsake us,
And with your help, O Lord, our battles we win.

With voices united our praises we offer,
Our songs of thanksgiving to you we now raise;
Your strong arm will guide us, our God is beside us,
To you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!

***Invocation to Worship**

One: Holy and loving God, in the midst of our earthly lives, we feel your Spirit calling us to seek you and worship you as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer!

All: In this hour of worship, receive us as we are so that we might be transformed by your love and wisdom. Amen!

***Opening Prayer**

Song of Meditation

“Ubi Caritas et Amore” #399

Where true charity and love abide, God is dwelling there; God is dwelling there.

(Sing 3x)

A Meditation on Micah 6:6-8

One: In times before recorded history, our scriptures claim that Sarah and Abraham became parents of the Hebrew people, who later became the Kingdom of Israel. From the Hebrew people, God summoned one named Moses to be a prophet. Beginning with Moses, the laws of Torah took shape. These laws separated the Hebrew people from all the other nations. Through the 613 laws of the Torah, the Hebrew people worshipped differently, farmed differently, ate differently, dressed differently, and lived differently, and all so that the Hebrew people would be *set apart* to be a royal priesthood—intercessors between God and humanity.

All: **Even if we do not follow the laws of the Torah, we join with our spiritual ancestors and profess the great statement of faith at the heart of the Torah, “Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”**

One: We honor how our Jewish ancestors wrestled with the things of God and humanity to be faithful to the God of their understanding, and to live well on the path of the Torah. As people who follow in the ways of Christ, we confess that our understanding of our Jewish ancestors is often insufficient.

All: **The story of Judaism is full of wonder, complexity, and nuance that deserves our respect and study.**

One: One part of that story is how God continued to call prophets to lead the Jewish people, and to connect them to the still-speaking voice of the living God. Within the pages of Jewish scripture, we find a turning point in the teachings of the prophets—a renewed call to understand what it is that God really desires for people of faith. Consider these words from the Prophet Micah:

“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”

One: As we are able, let us rise in spirit or body, and boldly sing again of the same prophetic qualities, and then remain standing for the Gospel reading.

“Ubi Caritas et Amore” #399

Where true charity and love abide,
God is dwelling there; God is dwelling there. *(Sing 2x)*

***Gospel**

Matthew 5:38-48

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say to you: Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, give your coat as well, ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴² Give to the one who asks of you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

Renewal and Reform is the Path of Faith, Part 1:

The Prophetic Turn of Religion

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

"Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" #587

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Chorus:

*O Master, grant that I may never seek—so much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

(Chorus)

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Celebration of Communion

Pastor: People of God, come to the table! Christ promised that as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we not only remember him, but we commune with him by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

All: This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come. We come to the table as a people who are learning the way of Christ. We confess that we are not always right. But we share this faith: that those who trust in Christ Jesus will grow in the assurance of God's eternal love.

Pastor: Jesus said to his disciples, "*my peace I leave you, my peace I give you.*" Open your hearts now—and may the peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Before we come to the table, let us share with one another a sign of peace.

(All are welcome to show a sign of peace with one another, in their own way)

Pastor: Together, now, let us bless the elements. Here at this table, we take bread and cup and 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.

All: Here at this table, we remember that Christ gave his entire life as an outpouring of God's love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.

Pastor: People of God, come to the table!

Communion Music

"Jesus Name Above all Names"

Cheryl & Sarah

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 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

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music

“How Great Thou Art”

Cheryl & Sarah

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.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*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: God of the Hebrew prophets, God of Jesus Christ, and God of us all: stir your Spirit within us to know again the values that reflect your heart:

**All: May we be a people who love justice, do kindness, and walk in humble faith.
Amen!**

*Blessing

*Closing Song

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing” #712 V. 1

Sent forth by God’s blessing our true faith confessing,
The people of God from this dwelling take leave.

The service is ended, O now be extended—the fruits of our worship in all who believe.

The seed of the teaching, receptive souls reaching,

Shall blossom in action for God and for all.

God’s grace did invite us, and love shall unite us

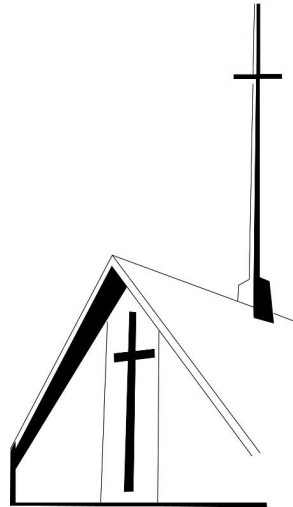
To work for God’s kingdom and answer the call!

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

Next Sunday - July 9, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Summer Sermon Series!

Renewal and Reform is the Path of Faith

Part 2, July 9: *Love and Spirit Overcoming Convention*

Acts 10:1-48 and Matthew 22:34-40

Part 3, July 16: *The Future of Church*

Acts 2:1-4, 43-47 and Matthew 28:26-20

***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 by Marguerite Miller

UPCOMING EVENTS:

July 5: Monthly Bible Study - Supper & Study

Need hearing assistance? We have four available units. Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.



WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army), Brittany Duncan (Army), Chris Duncan (Marines), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Matthew Anderson (Army) and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett & family & friends, Rod & Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Schweiwer, Diane Walker, George Churley, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Jared & Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski, Sally Cubetus, Jan & Tim Crowe and Family, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich and Dave Pakulski.

Council Members: Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall.