

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



July 23, 2023

**The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
"Wheat and Weeds"**

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Centering Music “There’s Just Something About That Name” #108

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus: there’s just something about that name!
Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all heaven and earth proclaim:
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there’s something about that name!
(sing twice)

Invocation to Worship

One: God of the Harvest, as we gather our growing abundance in this time of mid-summer, may we relish in the fruits of our labor.

All: May we also recognize that the weed, the rabbit, the deer, and the caterpillar also have needs for sustenance.

One: May we share the gifts of the earth, recognizing that all are welcome in God’s garden, and considering that what we call a weed may be a precious flower that has been planted by the Creator’s hands.

All: Be with us, Great Gardener, so that we might demonstrate thankfulness and appreciation for each other, and for the differences among us. Glory and praise be to God for God’s bounty and blessings. Amen!

***Opening Song** “Let All Things Now Living” #22

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving to God the Creator triumphantly raise,
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
who guides us and leads to the end of our days.
His banners are o’er us, his light goes before us, a pillar of fire shining forth in the night,
‘til shadows have vanished, and darkness is banished,
as forward we travel from light into light.
His law he enforces; the stars in their courses and sun in its orbit obediently shine.
The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
the deeps of the ocean proclaim his divine.
We too should be voicing our love and rejoicing; with glad adoration a song let us raise,
‘til all things now living unite in thanksgiving: to God in the highest, hosanna and praise!

***Opening Prayer**

First Reading

Isaiah 44:6-8

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first, and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them
proclaim it; let them declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old
the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. Do not fear or be afraid; have I not
told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

Song of Reflection

“He is Exalted” #122

He is exalted, the King is exalted on high; I will praise him.

He is exalted, forever exalted and I will praise his name!

He is the Lord! Forever his truth shall reign. Heaven and earth rejoice in his holy name.

He is exalted, the King is exalted on high.

(sing twice)

A Meditation on Isaiah 44:6-8

One: In our first reading today, we hear from the Prophet Isaiah, who in 740 BC had a vision that transported him into the throne room of God where he heard the angels sing, “Holy, holy holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” Later, Isaiah delivers the word of God to the people, saying “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no (other) God.”

Ponder for a moment...how big does God seem to you? God is not a small wooden statue or a stone sculpture. Scripture tells us that God is the Great “I Am.” What does this characterization mean to you?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: The last part of this Scripture from the Hebrew Bible conveys further words from God that point to the power and presence of God. Isaiah goes on to quote God: “Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.”

What does it mean for God to be considered as a rock? We often say there are rocks in our lives; that is, people who support us and stand by us. Is God The Rock to whom you turn? If so, what does that look like for you? Do we treat God as the first support we turn to in times of duress?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: God has promised to take care of us and has told us “not to be afraid of anything.” That is very hard to do! May we remember that God who is the first and the last is *already there*. God is the Rock in whom you can find comfort, sustenance, peace, hope, and forgiveness. There are no other Gods. Let us rise, now, in spirit and body as we are able, to sing the Gloria and prepare our hearts to hear the message of the Gospel:

***Gloria**

“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 13:24-30,36-43

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ” Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

“Wheat and Weeds”

Pastor Joy



Song of Response

“One Bread, One Body” #689

Refrain

One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.

Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man, no more

(Refrain)

Many the gifts, many the works, one in the Lord of all.

(Refrain)

Grain for the fields, scattered and grown, gathered to one, for all.

(Refrain)

Passing of the Peace

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

Celebration of Communion

Pastor: People of God, come to the table!

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: 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

“Bring the Rain”

Kelly McLaughlin, Dina Johnson

Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s Prayer (“Debts and Debtors”)

One: The Lord be with you.

All: ***And also with you.***

One: Let us pray today for all whose names or circumstances have been presented before us, whether from within the sanctuary or online. Let us also pray for each individual whose name is printed on the prayer list found on the last page of the bulletin, and may we also remember and pray for all those in our armed forces.

(prayer requests are read)

One: Holy and Loving God, in your wisdom, meet all 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 now 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

“One Day”

Kelly and Dina

Your offerings make this inclusive ministry possible. Thank you! Because of you, our church reaches through and beyond Erie: providing worship, community, and service.

Please give generously for the sustenance of our programs and our ministries!

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: Gracious God, in the literal and figurative gardens of our lives, help us to understand that even the weeds have a place. With your nurturing and your leading, may we convey to each other the patience and the charity and the love that is needed to remove that which does not contribute to your kingdom, being mindful that Jesus taught us the value of consideration for all people.

All: May we demonstrate and convey Christian love and God's grace in all that we do, and in every weedy garden we encounter. Amen!

***Blessing**

***Closing Song**

“Amazing Grace!” #422

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
‘tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

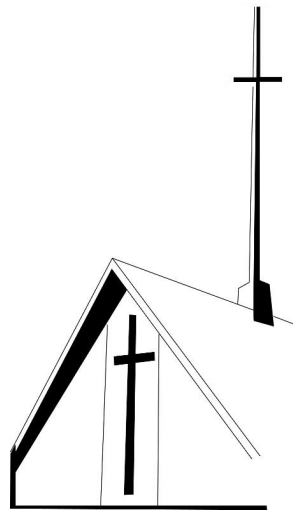


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday - July 30, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

“He Knows my Name”

Scripture for Study:

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Psalm 139

John 4:1-30

***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 Shelly Conrad in honor of her mother Carol Conrad's birthday.

Please consider signing up for our prayer ministry. This is not a prayer chain, nor another meeting or committee. We simply ask for those who are interested to email communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com and let us know if we can email you prayer requests for the church. It will not become a group email chain, nor a discussion group. It is simply (but importantly) an opportunity to pray for the life and ministries of Community United Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- July 26: Ladies Lunch 12:00 noon
- August 2: Bible Study – Supper & Study 6:30 p.m.
- August 8: **ERIE GIVES**
- August 8: Liberty House
- August 9: Spirits and Spirituality – Calamari's 7:00 p.m.

Mark your calendar! Please support Community United Church during ERIE GIVES. August 8, 2003. Learn more at Eriegives.org.

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, Dave Pikulski, Randi Johnson & Lillian Hendrickson.

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