

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



May 14, 2023

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

11:00 AM

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

“Sanctuary” #482

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for you.
(Repeat as guided)

Invocation:

One: People of God, Spirit gathers us to offer worship and praise to our Creator and Redeemer, the Holy One of Heaven and Earth—the One who was, and is, and is to come!

All: God of eternity, meet us in our realm of time and space. Find us as we are, even as we continue to search out your infinite and mysterious ways.

One: We come, O God, with our hurts and with our hopes, and with just enough faith to believe you will somehow bring peace and flourishing to our lives.

All: With the vision of the ancient prophets, we hold to the enduring promise that as a mother comforts her children, so you, O God, will comfort us. Amen.

*Song of Worship

“Great is Thy Faithfulness” #72

Great is thy faithfulness, O God Creator, there is no shadow of turning with thee;
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;
As thou has been thou forever wilt be.

Chorus:

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed thy hand hath provided—Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

(Chorus)

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!

(Chorus)

*Opening Prayer

Mothers’ Day Litany:

One: To those who gave birth this year to their first child—we celebrate with you. To those who have lost a child – we mourn with you. To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains – we appreciate you. To those who have experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoptions, or running away—we mourn with you. To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears, and disappointment – we walk with you. Forgive us when we say foolish things. We don’t mean to make this harder than it is.

All: To those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms – we need you. To those who have warm and close relationships with your children – we celebrate with you.

One: To those who have disappointment, heart ache, and distance with your children – we sit with you. To those who lost their mothers this year – we grieve with you. To those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother – we acknowledge your experience.

All: To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood – we are better for having you in our midst. To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year – we grieve and rejoice with you. And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising –we anticipate with you.

One: This Mother’s Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint of heart and we have real warriors in our midst. We remember you. Amen.

Song of Reflection

“Hymn of Promise” #515

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
 In cocoons, a hidden promise; butterflies will soon be free!
 In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
 Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
 There’s a dawn in every darkness bringing hope to you and me.
 From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
 Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
 In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity;
 In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
 Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

A Reflection on Searching for God

Acts 17:22-28

One: *Do you believe in God?* This question has been asked and answered in many different ways.

All: Some have found God in nature. Some have thought of God as just a bigger, stronger version of us. Some have said God is completely unknowable. Some have sought to image God in statues or paintings, or in theologies that seek to make God 'make sense.' In this church, we dare to believe that God is still speaking; and that God is still being revealed to us through the witness of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One: Consider, now, a story about how the apostle Paul once invited Greek and Roman people to think in new ways about God. Namely, that God transcends idols and altars, and that this God has been revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts tells the story this way:

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we, too, are his offspring.'"

One: Pause for a moment to consider Paul's call to 'search for God' as an invitation that is also for you. Ponder his words again—that "perhaps we might search for God, and *find* God, who is not far from us."

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: Is our faith open enough to allow God to be wonderfully expansive? To show up as God will, in loving and surprising ways? Or have we slipped into making God small enough to fit in human theologies—sometimes theologies that make God out to be cruel and unforgiving?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: Be open, now, to search for God without restraint. Let us open our hearts to what Jesus reveals about God. Please rise in spirit or body to sing of our ongoing search for God, and then remain standing for the good news of Christ, for all of God's people.

*Song of Reflection

“Seek Ye First” #349

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you; *Allelu, alleluia!*

Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find,
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you; *Allelu, alleluia!*

***Gospel Lesson:**

John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸ “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

Searching for God, Finding Love

Pastor Rich

Song of Reflection

“As the Deer” #471

As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you;
You alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength and shield; to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver, only you can satisfy;
You alone are the real joy-giver and the apple of my eye.
You alone are my strength and shield; to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship you.

You’re my friend and you are my brother, even though you are a king;
I love you more than any other, so much more than anything.
You alone are my strength and shield; to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship you.

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: 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 Christian love to one another, in their own way)

Pastor: Having signaled our love for one another, and for God, let us center our hearts on the sacrament. Together, 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

“We Remember You”

Leah Johnson & Bob Martin

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

“In My Daughter’s Eyes”

Leah Johnson

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 (BLUE) #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, may your Spirit keep urging us to seek after you—believing that there is always more to know of you, and to love of you.

All: As we continue our seeking and finding, remind us to live our lives by the law of love, which Christ gave us to fulfill—until the whole world is healed. Amen.

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

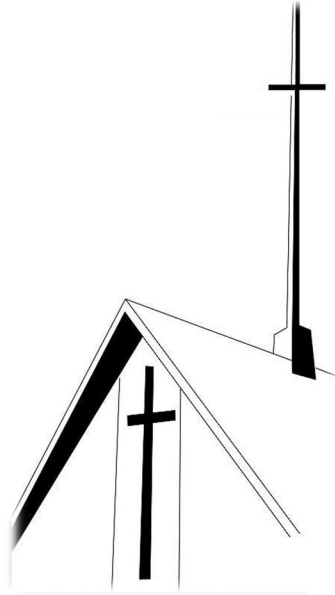
“Let There Be Peace on Earth” #614

Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator,
Children all are we.
Let us walk with each other—
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me;
Let this be the moment now.
With every step I take,
Let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me.



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



**Next Week:
Ascension Sunday
11:00 AM**

Assigned Readings from the Lectionary for Study:

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Psalm 93

Luke 24:44-53

Theme: Why the Ascension of Christ Matters

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect
online 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 Honor of Heavenly Anniversary to Mom and Dad from Freda & Elmer, Kathy Koziol & Lorre & Pat

This week:

- **Sunday, May 14:** Mother's Day
- **Thursday, May 17:** Resonate 7 PM
- **Tuesday, May 23:** Ladies Lunch 12 PM
- **Wednesday, May 10:** Spirits and Spirituality at Calamari's 7:00 PM

Special Announcements:

- Please see **Ginnie Burger** for directory updates

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),
Chris Duncan (Marines), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army),
Mathew Anderson (Army)
and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Kathy Koziol, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett and family and friends, Rod and Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer, Diane Walker, George Churley,
Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Jared and Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski,
Sally Cubetus, and Annette Minich.

Council Members:

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