

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2023

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music “Jesus, Name Above All Names” #177

Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, Living Word.
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, we gather in worship to be transformed by your Living Word—
your still-speaking voice that shatters injustice and hatred with a whisper, and
which binds up the weak and marginalized with a song of hope.

**All: Speak into our lives, *Most High God!* Help us to discern your voice, which still
cries out in the wilderness: “prepare the way of the LORD!” Amen!**

* Opening Hymn “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” #153

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel’s strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born to set thy people free;
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit—rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all sufficient merit—raise us to thy glorious throne!

***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 greet one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)

Advent Candles: Week II – PEACE

We invite all young people to come forward at this time to light our Advent candles!

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 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³ A voice cries out: "*In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD*; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers; the flower fades, [when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers; the flower fades,] but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹ Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and God's arm rules for the LORD; God's reward is with him and God's recompense before him. ¹¹ God will feed his flock like a shepherd; God will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

Responsorial

Psalm 85:8-13

One: Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for God will speak peace to his people, to God's faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts.

All: Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who revere the Holy One—that God's glory may dwell in our land.

One: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

All: The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before God and will make a path for God's steps. 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**

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. ² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

*“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way,
³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’ ”*

⁴ so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

*Prepare the Way of the Lord:
John the Forerunner of Christ*

Pastor Rich



Song of Response

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” #154

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 Christ Jesus to be our living bread, to nourish us forever.

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.

Communion Music

“He Shall Lead His Flock”

Sarah & Cheryl

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

One: The Lord be with you.

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

One: People of God, let us center our hearts and extend the spiritual power within us. *Let us pray:* For the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether joys or sorrows...*[prayer requests are presented]*...We also pray for everyone who has asked their name to be on the prayer list *[see last page of the bulletin]*. 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.

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.

**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

“Advent Hymn”

Julie Lokahi

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: Holy and loving God, you have sent prophets and messengers throughout time to prepare the way of the Reign of God—we ask, now, that you send us out with the same message.

All: Be our wisdom to announce the good news of Christ's peace. Be our courage to live as Christ did. Be our consolation when we cannot see the end of the road—and be our faith to follow wherever you lead us. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“Prepare the Way, O Zion” #152

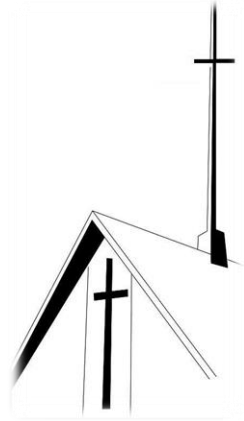
Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
Oh blest is Christ that came—in God's most holy name.

He brings God's rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.
Oh blest is Christ that came—in God's most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior's rule embrace.
His tidings of salvation—proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow before him, their voices will adore him.
Oh blest is Christ that came—in God's most holy name.



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



Next Sunday, December 17, 2022:
11:00 AM

The Third Week of Advent:

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126

Luke 2:39-56

Theme:

*The Coming Revolution of God –
Mary's Prophecy*

***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



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The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Margaret Miller.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 10: Symphonic Singers of Erie Holiday Concert, 3:00 PM (CUC Sanctuary)
- December 11: Council Meeting 6:30 PM
- December 12: Spirits & Spirituality – Calamari’s 7:00 PM
- December 12: Liberty House
- December 17: Advent Sunday School 9:15 AM

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),
Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army),
Matthew Anderson (Army), DJ Miaczynski (Marines), Jaden O’Hara (Army)
& Toby Charlton (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Karis Fenton, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett & family & friends, Rod & Dew Johnson,
Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer, Diane Walker, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester,
John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone,
Ron Celeski, Jan & Tim Crowe and Family, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich,
Dave Pikulski, Randi Johnson, Lillian Hendrickson, Wilma and Janice Skelly, Ethel Davis,
Jim Haglund, Chelsea Brown, John Waid, Patti Rogers, Celeste Eller & Family, Shirley Carrier,
Dave Wooledge, and Ev Smith

Council Members:

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