

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 17, 2023

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Embodying Forgiveness

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Prelude
Welcome & Announcements

“Come on In”

Dina Johnson & Kelly McLaughlin

Centering Music

“Blessed Be the Lord God Almighty” #19

Blessed be the Lord God almighty,
Who was, and is, and is to come;
Blessed be the Lord God almighty,
Who reigns forevermore!
(Sing 3x)

Invocation to Worship

One: Holy and loving God, you are indeed the Alpha and the Omega, the Eternal One. You have no beginning and no end—the Holy One who was, and is, and is to come.

All: **Remind us, O God, that the glory of your divinity is revealed here, on earth, through the ways of love and mercy. And now with all the angels and saints, and all who have gone before us, we worship you as our Creator, through Christ our Savior, with the Holy Spirit our life-giver—one God, forever and ever. Amen!**

*Opening Song

“Let the Whole Creation Cry” #6

Let the whole creation cry, “Glory to the Lord on high!”
Heaven and earth, awake and sing, “Praise to our almighty King!”
Praise him, angel hosts above, ever bright and fair in love;
Sun and moon, lift up your voice; night and stars in God rejoice.

Christians striving for the Lord, prophets burning with God’s Word,
Those to whom the arts belong—add their voices to the song.
Those of knowledge and of law, to the glorious circle draw;
All who work and all who wait, sing, “The Lord is good and great!”

Men and women, young and old, raise the anthem loud and bold,
And let children’s happy hearts in this worship take their parts;
From the north to southern pole—let the mighty chorus roll:
“Holy, Holy, Holy One, glory be to God alone!”

*Opening Prayer

*Passing of the Peace

One: The Lord be with you!

All: **And also with you!**

One: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

[Please be mindful that some people may not be able to shake hands or hug due to health precautions]

First Reading

Paul's Letter to the Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on slaves of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord. Also those who eat, eat for the Lord, since they give thanks to God, while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord and give thanks to God. ⁷ For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹² So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

Responsorial

Psalm 103:1-13

One: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me bless God's holy name.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all God's benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good for as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

One: The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

All: The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

One: God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

All: For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who revere the LORD. Amen!

*Gospel Acclamation

"Bless His Holy Name" #4

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
*He has done great things, he has done great things,
He has done great things, bless his holy name.*
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
(Sing 2x)

*Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to [Jesus], “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message:

Embodying Forgiveness

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

“Refiner’s Fire” #374

Purify my heart, let me be as gold—and precious silver.

Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold.

Chorus

Refiner’s fire; my heart’s one desire—is to be holy, set apart for you, Lord.

I choose to be—holy, set apart for you, my Master,

Ready to do your will.

Purify my heart, cleanse me from within—and make me holy.

Purify my heart, cleanse me from my sin, deep within.

(Chorus)

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: 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

“Living He Loved Me”

Cheryl Strecker

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*] 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.

**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

“Come As You Are”

Dina 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 #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, your forgiveness transcends whatever wrong exists between us. May we, too, be as merciful.

All: Grant us the courage to forgive others, and to practice reconciliation by the kindness of our speaking, the sharing of our resources, and the honoring of your desire for good. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Song

“Find Us Faithful” #497

O may all who come behind us find us faithful;
May the fire of our devotion light their way.
May the footprints that we leave—lead them to believe,
And the lives we live inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us find us faithful.

(Sing 2x)

Postlude

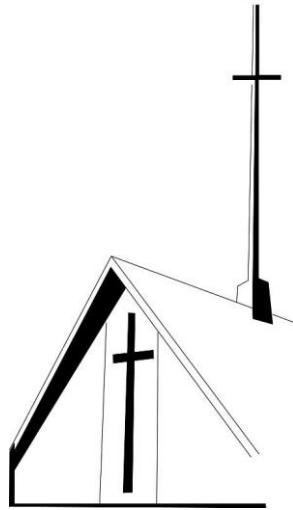
Cheryl Strecker

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

Next Sunday – September 24, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“The Prodigal Grace of God”

Scripture for Study:

Jonah 3:10-4:11

Psalm 145:1-8

Matthew 20:1-16

***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 Pastor Joy in honor of Dina's birthday on 9-18-23.

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.

Today's Elder: Linda Johnson **Deacons:** Pat Vahey & Michele Vahey

Important Note: Our "not so friendly" COVID has been visiting us here. For this reason, please maintain distance, particularly during the Passing of Peace.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

September 17: Service Sunday
September 20: Resonate – 7:00 PM
September 26: Ladies Lunch
October 4: Supper & Study 7:00 PM

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:

Erica Hyczyk, 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, 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, Dina Johnson & Patti Rogers.

Council Members:

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