

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 3, 2023

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

The Curious Values of the Reign of God

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

“Closer to God” Julie & Chris Moore with Bob Martin

Welcome & Announcements

Centering Music

“Surely the Presence” #131

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;
I can feel his mighty power and his grace.
I can hear the brush of angels’ wings, I see glory on each face;
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
(Sing twice)

Invocation to Worship

One: Holy and loving God, your Spirit gathers us in worship—to honor you, to be made whole in your love, and to be transformed by your grace.

All: **In your grace, shape our lives to manifest the ways of your Reign. Open our hearts and minds to the presence of your Spirit. And with all the angels and saints, and with all of our beloveds who have gone before us, we join our voices and our hearts as we worship you, One God forever and ever. Amen!**

*Opening Song “Praise the Lord! O Heavens, Adore Him” #17

Praise the Lord! O heavens, adore him; praise him, angels in the height;
Sun and moon, bow down before him; praise him, shining stars of light.
Praise the Lord, for he hath spoken; worlds his mighty voice obeyed;
Laws which never shall be broken—for their guidance he has made.

Praise the Lord, for he is gracious; never shall his promise fail;
God has made his saints victorious; sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the God of our salvation; hosts on high, his power proclaim;
Heaven and earth, and all creation, laud and magnify his name.

***Opening Prayer**

***Passing of the Peace**

One: The Lord be with you!

All: **And also with you!**

One: The peace of God is about restoration and wholeness: for all people and all creation.

All: **Today, we choose once more to be a people of peace—making the Gospel our guiding light and love our common rule. Amen.**



Litany for Labor Day (Adapted from *Worship Ways, UCC*)

One: Loving, Working God, on this Sunday we ask your special blessing on all people who labor, either for pay or as volunteers, in jobs or at school, in the workplace or at home, in our own country and around the world.

All: We especially pray for your blessings on workers who do not have jobs and for those whose inadequate pay does not allow them to live life fully.

One: Creator God, help us to build a new world in the midst of the old:

All: A world where all workers are valued.

One: A world where those who clean houses are also able to buy houses to live in.

All: A world where those who grow food can also afford to eat their fill.

One: A world where those who serve and care for others are, themselves, also served and cared for.

All: We pray for the coming of a world where all workers everywhere share in the abundance that you have given us.

One: We ask these things knowing that you give us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary.

All: Amen!

Song of Commitment “For the Healing of the Nations” #621

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord,
For a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action—help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead your people into freedom, from despair your world release,
That, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how, through care and goodness, fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned:
Pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice—may we hallow life’s brief span.

You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness, bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service earth its destiny may find.



First Reading

Paul's Letter to the Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord.

¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ Instead, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Responsorial

Psalm 105

One: O give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name, make known God's deeds among the peoples.

All: Sing to God, sing praises to the Holy One; tell of all God's wonderful works.

One: Glory in God's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

All: Seek the LORD and the strength of God; seek God's presence continually.

One: Remember the wonderful works that God has done, God's miracles and the judgments that God has uttered.

All: The Holy One is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

One: God is mindful of his covenant forever, of the word that God commanded for a thousand generations.

All: Praise the LORD! Amen!

*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 16:21-28

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message: The Curious Values of the Reign of God

Song of Response "Blessed Are They" #666

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

Chorus:

*Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!*

Blest are they, the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth.
Blest are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill.
(Chorus)

Blest are they—who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.
Blest are they, the pure of heart, they shall see God.
(Chorus)

Blest are they—who show peace. They are the children of God.
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs.
(Chorus)

Blest are you who suffer hate, all because of me.
Rejoice—be glad—yours is the kingdom; shine for all to see!
(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

“In the Palm of Your Hand”

Julie & Chris Moore with 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*] 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

“Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven”

Julie & Chris Moore with Bob Martin

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: Faithful God, you are the hope of the oppressed, and the source of freedom for those held captive.

All: **Make us strong to witness your liberating power—in generosity of life and in humility of spirit—that all the world may delight in your goodness. Amen!**

*Blessing

***Closing Song**

“Give to Our God Immortal Praise” #63

Give to our God immortal praise;
Mercy and truth are all his ways:
Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat his mercies in your song.

He built the earth, he spread the sky,
And fixed the starry lights on high:
Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat his mercies in your song.

He fills the sun with morning light;
He bids the moon direct the night:
His mercies ever shall endure,
When suns and moons shall shine no more.

He sent his Son with power to save
From guilt and darkness and the grave:
Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat his mercies in your song.

Through this vast world he guides our feet,
And leads us to his heavenly seat:
His mercies ever shall endure,
When this our world shall be no more.

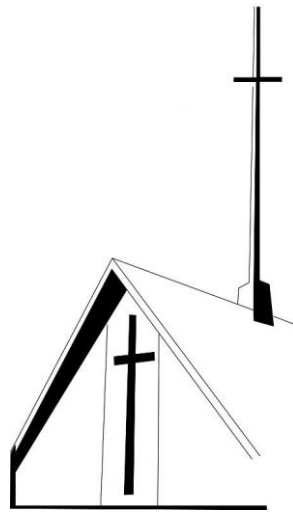


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday – September 10, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Love in Action”

Scripture for Study:

Romans 13:8-14

Psalm 119:33-40

Matthew 18:15-20

***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 April Knapp in Celebration of 12 years with Natalie.

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: Carol Rodgers Deacons: Angel Conrad & Nancy Alberico

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 6: Bible Study – “Supper & Study” - 6:30 PM
September 11: Council Meeting – 6:30 PM
September 12: Liberty House
September 13: Spirits & Spirituality – Calamari's 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:

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.

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