

# Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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

**Epiphany Commemoration Sunday**

**January 8, 2023:**

**11:00 AM**

# Epiphany Sunday

We are now in the Season of Epiphany! The word epiphany means “to reveal.” On the first Sunday of Epiphany many Christian churches commemorate the story of the three Magi who followed a star to Bethlehem—the time at which Christ began to be revealed to the world. For seven weeks we are in the Season of Epiphany, from that story of the mysterious star over Bethlehem, to Christ’s transfiguration on the mountain. This is a season for us to consider what the scriptures reveal about the life of Christ. As we do, we can find ourselves closer to the heart of God.

## Today’s Readings:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Matthew 2:1-12

## **Theme:**

**Light of the World Revealed**

## Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty, Senior Pastor  
Pastor Joy Johnson, Associate Minister

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



## Renewing our Spiritual Commitments

One: Friends in Christ, as we have come to the New Year let us also reaffirm our spiritual path, and ask the Holy Spirit to guard and guide us.

**All: Spirit of God, surround us. Christ Jesus, defend us. Almighty God, enfold us.**

One: Do you reject all that is evil, seen and unseen—and all evil works that break apart our communion with God, with one another, and with nature?

**All: I do.**

One: Do you remain open to faith in God, the One who is Mystery upon mystery, Deep upon deep; the One who is the Source of heaven and earth?

**All: I do.**

One: Do you open your heart to Jesus Christ—the one born in humble human flesh; the one who lived love and justice, the one who demonstrated forgiveness with his own death; and the one who promises everlasting life through the mystery of resurrection?

**All: I do.**

One: Do you open your life to the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit, God's presence with us?

**All: I do.**

One: May almighty God bless you and keep you—your minds open, your bodies secure, your heart generous, and your spirit inclined towards all that is of God. Amen.

Song of Praise

“How Majestic is Your Name” #42

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

O Lord—we praise your name!

O Lord—we magnify your name:

Prince of Peace, Mighty God,

O Lord God Almighty.

*(Repeat)*

**First Reading**

**Isaiah 60:1-6**

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. <sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and God's glory will appear over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. <sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. <sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. <sup>6</sup>...They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Arise, your light is come!  
The Spirit's call obey;  
Show forth the glory of your God,  
Which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!  
Fling wide the prison door;  
Proclaim the captive's liberty,  
Good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!  
All you in sorrow born,  
Bind up the broken-hearted ones  
And comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come!  
The mountains burst in song!  
Rise up like eagles on the wing,  
God's power will make us strong.

**Second Reading**

**Ephesians 3:1-12**

This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—<sup>2</sup> for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, <sup>3</sup> and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup> a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup> In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup> that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

## Responsorial

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

One: Give the king your justice, O God, your righteousness to the descendent of a king.

**All: May the promised one judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.**

One: May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

**All: May your promised one defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush oppression.**

One: May all kings fall down before the promised one whom you shall send, and all nations give service to the holy one.

**All: For the holy one delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. The holy one has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence the holy one redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. 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

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

<sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."  
<sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

One: These are the words of God for the people of God.

**All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!**

Message

***Light of the World Revealed!***

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

"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!*

Affirmation of Faith:

APOSTLES' CREED

***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

## COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People of God, the light of Christ's Holy Star illuminated Bethlehem—where Christ was born. Bethlehem means "house of Bread." Christ came for us, and for our salvation, to be the living bread of heaven and the cup of eternal life.

**All: Our altar table is also a cradle for the living Christ—who meets us once again in the bread and in the cup. Here at this table, food for the body also becomes food for the spirit.**

Pastor: This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come.

**All: We come to the table as 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: And so, here at this Table we take bread and cup and ask the Holy Spirit to bring us back to Bethlehem to meet the infant Christ; to bring us back to Judea to meet the living Christ; to bring us back to the Cross to meet the dying Christ; and to bring us back to the empty tomb to meet the Risen Christ, body and blood, love poured out, forever!

**All: Here at this Table we remember that Christ indeed 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!



## **Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer**

One: The Lord be with you.

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

One: Let us pray: For all of those who need a light to guide their way. Bring to everyone a source of inspiration and illumination to take the next steps we need for the journey.

All: **God hear our prayer!**

One: That we might learn from the Magi and their quest for truth. May we never be so stubborn in our own ways, and with the things of our own culture, that we fail to follow wherever the real truth leads.

All: **God hear our prayer!**

One: For those who seek but feel like they never find; for those who knock only to find closed doors. May they, and we, be persistent in faith, while also learning how to rest and renew.

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/donate/](http://www.communityunited.church/donate/)

Or, if you prefer to mail in a check, that can be addressed to the church at:

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music and Time for Contemplation

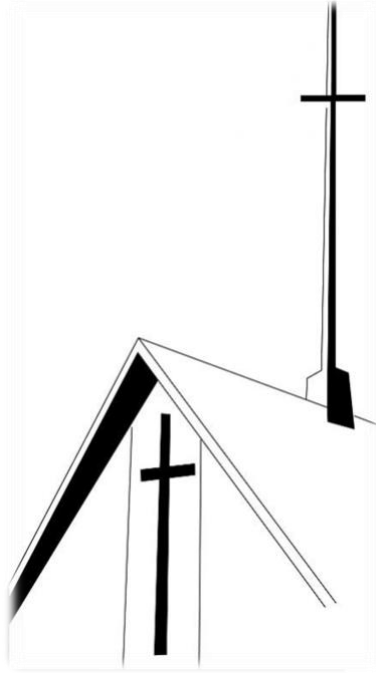
Cheryl Strecker

*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.*

## **Offertory Prayer of Thanks**



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



**Next Sunday, January 15, 2023:**

**Online Worship:**

**11:00 AM**

***Readings:***

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Psalm 40:1-11

John 1:29-42

**The Second Sunday after Epiphany:**

**Look! The Lamb of God**

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect  
with a small group or church ministry?***

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

[www.communityunited.church](http://www.communityunited.church)



## *Community United Church*

**THE ALTAR FLOWERS THIS MORNING ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD**

Tuesday: Liberty House Dinner 5:30 PM  
Wednesday: Spirits and Spirituality 7:30 PM at Calamari's

**WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:**

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army), Shelby Wescott (Army), Mathew Anderson (Army) and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

**PRAYERS FOR:**

Rod and Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer, Julie Davis, Diane Walker, George Churley, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, Sharon Cooper, Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Jared and Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski, Sally Cubetus, and Annette and Ralph Minich.

**Council Members:**

***Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Ginnie Burger (Treas.), Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall***