

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



## Christmas Eve Worship

**December 24, 2024**

8:00 PM

**Christmas Proclamation:**

Luke 2:8-14

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

**\*Opening Hymn**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” #182

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold him, born the king of angels.

***Refrain:***

*O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above:  
“Glory to God, all glory in the highest!” *(Refrain)*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing *(Refrain)*

**\*Opening Prayer****Advent Wreath and Christ Candle**

**One:** Advent hope moves us; Advent love leads us; Advent joy stirs us; Advent peace stills us—that we might affirm our Savior and King Jesus. It is time we set flame to this Advent affirmation by lighting the Christ Candle, now, on Christmas Eve.

**All:** **We believe that Jesus is the living Word of God. He was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. He was—and is—the long-awaited Messiah, whose coming was promised. By the Holy Spirit, the same Jesus who reigns in heaven also dwells in our hearts. As *God-with-Us*, Christ deserves our highest loyalty and total commitment. In Jesus Christ, our hope is fulfilled; our love is realized; our joy is complete; and our peace is sealed. Rejoice! A Savior is born!**

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:  
 peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
 with th'angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

**Refrain:**

*Hark! the herald angels sing,  
 "Glory to the newborn King"*

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
 late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:  
 veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,  
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. *(Refrain)*

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
 Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
 Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. *(Refrain)*

**First Reading****The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 52:7-10**

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."  
<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices; together they shout for joy, for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup> Break forth; shout together for joy, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; God has redeemed Jerusalem.  
<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

**Song of Response**

## “Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates” #176

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates: behold the, the King of glory waits!  
 The King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart: make it a temple set apart  
 From earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide—my heart to you: here, Lord, abide!  
 Let me your inner presence feel: your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign, enter in! Let new and nobler life begin!  
 Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

## Second Reading

Paul's Letter to Titus 3:4-7

<sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. <sup>6</sup> This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

## Responsorial

Psalm 97

One: The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad.

**All: The heavens proclaim God's righteousness, and all the peoples behold the glory of the Holy One.**

One: Light dawns for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart.

**All: Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and given thanks to God's holy name.  
Amen!**

## Third Reading

The Gospel of John 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

\*Hymn of Praise

"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 a child and yet a king,  
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.



**\*Gospel****Luke 2:1-20**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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

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

Message

**Christ is Born!**

Pastor Rich

Hymn

"Angels We have Heard on High" #188

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.

*Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo! Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo!*

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say, what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?

*Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo! Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo!*

Come to Bethlehem and see, him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee—Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

*Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo! Glo-ria—in excelsis Deo!*

## Christmas 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 humanity, through Christ Jesus, to be our living bread.**

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—the Holy 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!

Communion Music

“Do You Hear What I Hear”

Kelly McLaughlin, Dina Johnson and Shelly Conrad

## Prayers of the People

One: The Lord be with you.

**All: And also with you!**

Let us pray: *Wonderful Counselor*, tonight we pray for the world’s leaders to use their power to lift burdens, to act justly, and to ease the suffering of those who need it most.

**All: God, hear our prayer!**

*Mighty God*, tonight we pray for those who are sick, those who may be dying, and for those who have lost loved ones. We pray for those who may feel alone and lonely. May those who walk in deep darkness now begin to see the great light of hope.

**All: God, hear our prayer!**

One: *Prince of Peace*, we pray for an end to violence and warfare, and that your authority may continue to grow until there is endless peace in every land. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the Christ-child, 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

“Were You There on That Christmas Night”

Leah, Addie, and Millie 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.*

## Christmas Affirmation of Faith

Pastor: People of God, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

**All: Christ is born! Death no longer has a hold on us! Darkness must flee.  
Amen!**

Lighting of Candles

“Ave Maria”

Sarah Strecker

Hymn

“Silent Night” #186

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight:  
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing, “Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!”

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light,  
radiant, beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light.  
With the angels let us sing “Alleluia” to our King,  
“Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.”

\*Departing Prayer

One: Living God, tonight we stand with the shepherds—amazed at your glory. We sing with the angels, rejoicing in your work. We wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise. And we sit with Mary, cradling your love.

**All: May the good news of this night inspire us to tell the world of our great joy: *For unto us is born a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.* Glory and praise to you forever and ever. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“Joy to the World! #179

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her king;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let all their songs employ  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground.  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders, wonders of his love.



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



**Upcoming Service:**

**Sunday, December 29, 2024:**

**First Sunday of Christmas, 11:00 AM (In-person, only)**

***A Very Merry Christmas to All!***

***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)**



# 2024 Christmas Poinsettia Remembrances

- Nancy Alberico: *To the Glory of God!*
- Ginnie Burger: *Merry Christmas to my church family!*
- Churley Family: *To the Glory of God and in memory of loved ones.*
- John Patrick Driscoll: *To the Glory of God and for Judith's healing.*
- Kathy Koziol: *In remembrance of family members passed.*
- Carol Rodgers: *From the Kurty, Pruzinsky, and Rodgers families!*
- Al & Pam Tilley: *Merry Christmas!*
- Michele & Pat Vahey: *In memory of family members passed.*