

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



April 27, 2025

The Second Sunday of Easter

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Richard W. McCarty & Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Centering Music

“As We Gather” #646

As we gather may your Spirit work within us,  
As we gather may we glorify your Name.  
Knowing well that as our hearts begin to worship,  
We'll be blessed because we came—we'll be blessed because we came.  
*(Repeat all)*

Invocation

**One:** Holy and loving God, we come together to worship on this second Sunday of Easter to continue to bear witness to the power, glory, and mystery of the resurrection of Christ.

**All: Spirit of God, show us—once more—how faith in the death and resurrection of Christ is a transformational encounter, not a test of doctrine. Help us to welcome questions of faith, as much as Christ himself did. Amen!**

\*Hymn

“The Day of Resurrection!” #298

The day of resurrection! Earth tell it out abroad;  
The Passover of gladness, the Passover of God.  
From death to life eternal, from sin's dominion free,  
Our Christ has brought us over with hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil, that we may see aright  
The Lord in rays eternal of resurrection light;  
And, listening to his accents, may hear, so calm and plain,  
His own “all hail” and, hearing, may raise the victor strain.

Now let the heavens be joyful! Let earth its song begin!  
The world resound in triumph, and all that is therein;  
Let all things seen and unseen their notes of gladness blend;  
For Christ the Lord has risen, our Joy that has no end.

\*The Peace of Christ

**One:** People of God, the Peace of Christ be with you, All!

**All: And also with you!**

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



## First Reading

## The Book of Revelation 1:4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. So it is to be. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

## Responsorial

## Psalm 150

One: Praise the LORD! Praise God in [the heavenly] sanctuary; praise God in the mighty firmament!

**All: Praise the Holy One for all God's mighty deeds; praise the LORD according to God's surpassing greatness.**

One: Praise God with trumpet sound; praise God with lute and harp! Praise God with tambourine and dance; praise God with strings and pipe!

**All: Praise God with clanging cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! 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

John 20:19-31

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of [persecution], Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." <sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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

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

Message

The Honesty of Doubt

Pastor Rich

Hymn

"As a Fire is Meant for Burning" #551

As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame,  
So the church is meant for mission, giving glory to God's name.  
Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care,  
We join hands across the nations, finding neighbors everywhere.

We are learners, we are teachers; we are pilgrims on the way.  
We are seekers; we are givers; we are vessels made of clay.  
By our gentle, loving actions, we would show that Christ is light.  
In a humble, listening spirit, we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime is a sign of life renewed,  
So may we be signs of oneness, 'mid earth's peoples, many hued.  
As a rainbow lights the heavens when a storm is past and gone,  
May our lives reflect the radiance of God's new and glorious dawn.

## 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: And so, 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

“Glorious Day”

Cheryl Strecker

## 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 that is 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 all who have asked to be on our prayer list—and so we ask: Holy and Loving God, in your wisdom, meet all of these needs in the perfect way of your grace. We pray together:

**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 financial contributions to the church are what allow us to support our ministries. As you can give, please do so joyfully!*

**If you are not in the sanctuary, online donations can be made at:  
[www.communityunited.church](http://www.communityunited.church)**

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

“Beautiful City”

Jerry Stroebel

*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 Thanksgiving

\*Congregational Response (BLUE) #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, in your love you meet us *where* we are, and *how* we are—sometimes full of faith, and sometimes we are full of questions.

**All: Spirit of God, help us to live our questions with integrity so that our faith can grow in authenticity. Amen.**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“Lift High the Cross” #287

Refrain:

*Lift high the cross,  
the love of Christ proclaim  
Till all the world—  
Adore his sacred name.*

Come, Christians, follow  
Where our Savior trod,  
Our King victorious,  
Christ, the Son of God.

*Refrain*

All newborn servants  
Of the Crucified  
Bear on their brow  
The seal of Christ who died.

*Refrain*

O Lord, once lifted  
On the glorious tree,  
Your death has brought us  
Life eternally.

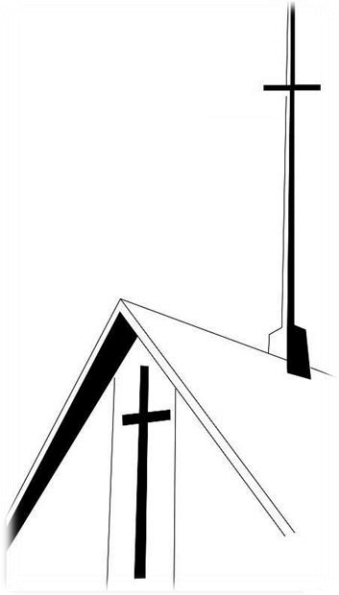
*Refrain*

So shall our song of  
Triumph ever be:  
Praise to the Cru-ci-fied  
For victory.

*Refrain*



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



**Next Week:**  
**Third Sunday of Easter**

**11:00 AM**

*Readings:*

Revelation 5:11-14

Psalm 30

John 21:1-19

**Theme: How We Love Christ**

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect  
online 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 and in celebration of  
Pastor Joy's birthday from Dina Johnson**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- May 7: Bible Study at 6:30 PM  
May 14: Spirits & Spirituality at 7:00 PM  
May 21: Resonate Contemplative Service at 7:00 PM

SAVE THE DATE: June 7: Second Annual Arts, Craft, and Bake Sale at CUC

### Reminders:

- ***Need hearing assistance? We have four available units. Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.***
- Have you signed up for **Small Group discussion** opportunities to continue our discernment for **church growth and stewardship**? See signup sheet in the Fellowship Hall.

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

Jackson Feiock (Army), Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Brittany Duncan (Army), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Jaden O'Hara (Army), Toby Charlton (Marines), Cole Posnett (Army), Hunter Miaczynski (Army) & Mathew Anderson (Army)

### **PRAYERS FOR:**

Darek Baksik, Laura Will, Keith Vargeson, Joyce Kneidel, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Linda Foll-Johnson, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Josh Cook & Danny Kaeberlein, Helena Burgos, The Vadzemnieks Family, Doug Moore, and John & Tina Schnarrs

### **Current Council Members:**

Mike Pruzinsky (President), Debbie Anderson (Vice President), Melanie Vadzemnieks (Treasurer), Nancy Alberico (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Angel Conrad, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, and Mark Davis

Need to contact our Council President? Please email at: [mpruzinsky@icloud.com](mailto:mpruzinsky@icloud.com)

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# Community United: Season of Lent in Review

Dear Members and Friends of Community United Church,

Easter Sunday was really a great time of worship and community for our congregation! Perhaps you also caught the news story on our church through WJET. They put together a nice segment about us. At the end of which, they encouraged their viewers to come visit us. We're grateful for that kind of coverage! As we journey into the Easter season, let's take a quick look back on where we've been in the Season of Lent.

## Worship

- Lent began on Wednesday, March 5 (Ash Wednesday). We had a meaningful evening service and the dispensation of Ashes in the sanctuary. Then the Sundays of Lent explored the following themes:
  - On March 9: *Christ's trials and temptations in the desert*
  - On March 16: *Learning not to turn prophetic anger into wrath*
  - On March 23: *Exploring the question of why bad things happen to good people*
  - On March 30: *God's unconditional and prodigal mercy for us*
  - On April 6: *The worship of God as right and just; and from our services we go out to serve*
  - On April 13: *Palm Sunday and Christ's entrance into Jerusalem*
- We also had additional special worship services for the season, which included:
  - Wednesday, March 19: Our monthly 7:00 PM Resonate service, on hope.
  - Sunday, March 30: Our monthly 9:00 AM Praise & Prayer service
  - Holy Week, Maundy Thursday at 6:30 PM: our annual commemoration of the Last Supper
  - Holy Week, Good Friday at 8:00 PM: our annual commemoration of the Death of Christ
- Children's Church continues to be very well attended throughout the weeks. We are so happy to see the number of youth growing in our congregation. This is a good reminder to let people know that our ministries are for all ages. A special thanks to Angel Conrad for organizing this ministry, and for all who helped to staff it over the weeks. We can definitely use more volunteers for Children's Church, so please do let us know if you'd like to help.

## Stewardship & Finances

- February 2025 Update:
  - Investment Dividend: \$1,800
  - Interest from CD: \$2,100+
- March 2025 Budget Update:
  - Offerings: \$8,089.50
  - Expenses: \$10,863.67
- Year-to-Date Update (Jan-March):
  - Offerings: \$23,976.42
  - Other Revenue: \$1,800; \$2,100+ (Dividend and CD Interest)
  - Expenses: \$28,292.08

## **Stewardship & Finances (continued)**

*Thank you for your generosity! Every gift is a meaningful one at this church. Every gift opens doors for sharing the unconditional and inclusive love of God in word and deed! If you would like to consider planned giving, let the pastors know and they will connect you with the Stewardship & Finance team.*

### **Service:**

- Giving back to the community:
  - Liberty House:
    - Monthly meal preparation and sharing; benefitting U.S. Veterans between homes and jobs.
  - Service Sunday:
    - Monthly bagged lunches, benefitting our neighbors in need through the Upper Room (in coordination with our sibling congregation: St. Paul's UCC).
  - Ladies Outreach Ministry:
    - Continuous service to children and adults in need in the Erie area; during Lent, hairbrushes were collected for the women's overnight shelter in the city.

### **Education:**

- We had two very well attended "Soup & Simplicity" gatherings (March 12 and April 9). We shared meals, Lenten Devotions, and discussion on our journey of faith as a church body.
- Our Bible Study Group began a study of the Book of Ruth. Join us on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall.

### **House & Grounds:**

- You may have noticed driving into the parking lot that winter created a significant pothole at the entrance. We were able to take \$2,300 from our investment portfolio for the repaving project, which will soon be completed.

### **Congregational Note:**

- As a reminder, in 2025 we are being intentional about organizational structure and leadership. Our church council members each represent areas of ministry in the church. Each committee or team has a chair or co-chairs. The goal is to make sure we keep communication lines clear, ideas shared, and invitations open for the growth of the ministries and members of our church. So, if you have an idea, or see something that needs done, kindly reach out to the team who has signed up to provide those services. If you need a refresher on committees and teams, please reach out to Church Council President Michael Pruzinsky.

Thank you, All,  
Pastors Rich & Joy