

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



August 9, 2026

The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

11:00 AM

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Welcome and Announcements

Centering Music

"I Love You, Lord" #85

I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice
To worship you, O my soul, rejoice!
Take joy, my King, in what you hear:
May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear.
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Holy God, we come before you just as we are. Some of us arrive with grateful hearts, while others carry burdens too heavy for words. Some of us come with confidence, and others come searching for you in places that feel uncertain or dark.

All: Meet us here, O God, and remind us that your love never leaves us.

One: The Psalmist cried out in pain, wondering where you were, yet never stopped reaching toward you. Give us the courage to bring you our whole selves –our joy and our sorrow, our hope and our doubt, our certainty and our questions.

All: Receive every prayer we offer, spoken and unspoken, and draw us ever closer to You.

One: As we worship today, open our hearts to your presence. Help us discover that even when we cannot see the way ahead, you are still leading us, loving us, and holding us in your loving care.

All: We come to worship the God who is faithful in every season, the Light who shines even in the darkest places. Amen!

***Opening Hymn**

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" #71

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near,
Join me in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;
Sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is needful has been
Sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his people again;
Gladly forever adore him.

***Opening Prayer**

***The Peace of Christ**

One: 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

Romans 8:31-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶

As it is written,
"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Responsorial

Adapted from Psalm 22

One: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

All: Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

One: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my chest; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

All: O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!

One: I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

All: From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! 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 12:37-43

Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said,

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
so that they might not look with their eyes
and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them.”

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him. ⁴² Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue, ⁴³ for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Children’s Message

Song of Preparation

“As the Deer” #471

As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you;
You alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.

Refrain

You alone are my strength and shield; to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart’s desire and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver, only you can satisfy;
You alone are the real joy giver and the apple of my eye.

(\Refrain)

You’re my friend and you are my brother, even though you are a king;
I love you more than any other, so much more than anything!

(Refrain)

Hymn of Response

"Be Not Afraid" # 430

You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.
You shall see the face of God and live.

Refrain

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come, follow me, and I will give you rest.

If you pass through raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown.
If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed.
If you stand before the power of hell and death is at your side.
Know that I am with you through it all.

(Refrain)

Blessed are your poor, for the kingdom shall be theirs.
Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.
And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of me.
Blessed, blessed are you!

(Refrain)





Celebration of Communion

Pastor: Beloved children of God, as we gather around a table that has never been meant for the perfect, the powerful, or those who have everything figured out. This is a table for those who are searching, those who are weary, those who are hungry for hope, and those who long to know they are loved.

All: We come as we are. We bring our joys and our struggles, our questions and our faith, trusting that God's grace is enough for us all.

Pastor: At this table we remember Jesus, who saw a hungry crowd and did not send them away. He did not tell them there was not enough. He did not ask them to prove their worthiness. He took what they had, gave thanks, broke the bread, and revealed the abundance of God's love. On the night before he was betrayed, Jesus gathered with his disciples, took bread, gave thanks, broke it and offered it to them, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant poured out for you and for all people. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

All: Loving God, we give you thanks for the gift of this table. Here we are reminded that your love is wider than our divisions, deeper than our fears, and stronger than anything that seeks to separate us. Feed us with your grace, strengthen us with your Spirit, and send us from this place to share your love with a hungry world. Amen.

Pastor: Come, for all things are ready. This is Christ's table, and all are welcome.

Communion Music

Sarah 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 open ourselves to the presence of the God who meets us in our hunger, strengthens us in our struggles, and calls us into lives of compassion and love. *Let us pray:* Holy and Loving God, we come before you today carrying all that we are. Some of us come with gratitude, some with questions, and some with burdens that feel too heavy to carry alone. Remind us that your grace meets us wherever we are and that your abundance is greater than our fears. Today we lift before you the joys and concerns of our community. We pray for those who need your comfort, your healing, your strength, and your peace. We offer these prayers now: (*prayer requests are presented*)...for these prayers and all those held silently in our hearts, we trust in your loving care.

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

One: In the quiet of this moment, we offer to you the prayers we cannot speak aloud. (*silent prayers*)... Gracious God, take what we bring, even when it feels small, and use it for your work of love in the world. Help us recognize your abundance, share your compassion, and continue the ministry of Jesus by making room for all at the table. 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

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

Offertory/Ministry of Music

Sarah Strecker

Offertory Prayer of Thanksgiving

***Congregational Response #147**

"Praise God, from whom all blessings 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: Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word today; remind us that even in the darkness, you are near.

All: We thank you for your faithful presence, even when we cannot always feel or see it.

One: Thank you for welcoming our questions, hearing our prayers, and strengthening our hearts with hope.

All: Help us to remember your faithfulness in every season of life.

One: Receive our gratitude for this time of worship, and remain with us as we continue our journey of faith.

All: With thankful hearts, we praise you and trust in your unfailing love. Amen.

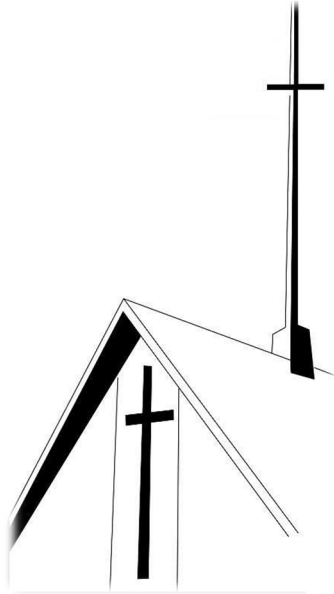
***Blessing**

“Let All Things Now Living” #22

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
To God the Creator triumphantly raise,
Who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
Who guides us and leads to the end of our days.
His banners are o’er us, his light goes before us,
A pillar of fire shining forth in the night,
Till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,
As forward we travel from light into light.

His laws he enforces; the stars in their courses
And sun in its orbit obediently shine;
The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
The deeps of the ocean proclaim him divine.
We too should be voicing our love and rejoicing;
With glad adoration a song let us raise,
Till all things now living unite in thanksgiving:
To God in the highest, hosanna and praise!

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



**Next Week:
Sunday, August 16, 2026
11:00 AM**

Readings:
Isaiah 56:1-8
Psalm 67
Matthew 15:10-28

Theme: What's in Your Heart?

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508
(814) – 864 – 4429

www.communityunited.church

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com



Community United Church

The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Ginnie Burger in honor of the CUC Women's Outreach Group

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Important: ERIE GIVES event- Give through the Erie Gives website on **August 11, 2026, from midnight to midnight**, or by phone at **814.454.0843, from 8am to 8pm**. Checks may also be taken to the Hagen History Center on August 4th between 10-2 and 4-6 only

- August 10: The family of Rose Goss will receive friends at the Dusckas Funeral Home, 2607 Buffalo Rd., Erie, between 4 PM and 7 PM, and the funeral service will begin at 7 PM.
- August 11: Liberty House Veterans' Ministry
- August 13: Crafternoon in Fellowship Hall – 1:30-3:30 PM
- August 16: Service Sunday
- August 18: Women's Group monthly luncheon – 12 PM
- August 19: *Spirits & Spirituality* – 7 PM – Calamari's Squid Row

Need hearing assistance? We have four available devices to enhance your worship experience! Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.

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), Zachary Oliver (PA Army National Guard), Aran Maloney (Air National Guard), and Connor Bille (Army)

PRAYERS FOR:

Linda Hilbert, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Ethel Davis, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Sandra Ganley, Dorothy Moyer, Celeste Peck, Linda Foll Johnson, Debra Jackman, Zoey Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Linda Weber, Veronica, Patty Puzar, Joan Schultz, Michelle and Melissa, Tom and Thea Hyatt, Randy Koziol, Barbara Thompson, Tanisha and Jaeda, Barbara Hickey, Sandy Gool, Jim Haglund, family and friends of Lorre Rapp, Ruth Zavaglia, Brad Stewart, Cain Hickey, Cal Bretz, Zoey Foote, Earl Hall, Patty Brogdan, and friends and family of Rosie Goss

Your 2026 Council Members:

Thea Hyatt, President, Ginnie Burger, Vice President, Tracy Davis, Treasurer, Juli Tonks, Secretary, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, Chuck Becker, and Don Cameron

You may call the church office at 814-864-4429 for pastoral and administrative matters
or use email: communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com

Don't forget to check Facebook and our website: **communityunited.church**

Community United Church is committed to ethical and legal compliance
in our music and livestreaming:

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A PRAYER OF UNKNOWING



My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

- Thomas Merton



Read Here about One Area of our Outreach Activities:

<https://communityunited.church/devotions/a-place-where-everyone-belongs-heres-what-your-erie-gives-dollars-make-possible>



Thank you for your support of Community United Church! Your dollars reach many!

Small Acts, Big Heart

