

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



Commemoration of the Epiphany

January 7, 2024

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music

“Surely the Presence” #131

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;
I can feel God’s mighty power—and 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
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our eternal Advocate and Friend.

All: And also with you.

One: People of God, we have come to the season of *Epiphany*. Epiphany means “*to reveal!*” In this season, we find Christ revealed to the world in many ways: First, by the star of Bethlehem and the visiting Magi. Then, as the season unfolds, we are invited to perceive the light of heaven—in *Jesus*—in his baptism, his teachings, his miracles, and in his transfiguration on the mountaintop.

All: As we journey through this new season of the church, let us be like those Magi, willing to follow the light of heaven, wherever she leads. Amen!

* Opening Hymn

“Angels from the Realms of Glory” #189

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth;
You who sang creation’s story, now proclaim Messiah’s birth:
Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o’er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations, you have seen the natal star:
Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn King!

***Opening Prayer**

***Sign of Peace**

One: The peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

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

(You may choose to greet one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)

Renewing our Spiritual Commitments

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

All: Spirit of God, renew 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 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 hearts generous, and your spirits inclined towards all that is of God. Amen.

Song of Renewal

“The Power of Your Love” #467

Lord, I come to you; let my heart be changed, renewed,

Flowing from the grace that I've found in you.

And Lord, I've come to know—the weaknesses I see in me will be stripped away—

By the power of your love.

Chorus:

Hold me close, let your love surround me. Bring me near, draw me to your side.

And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle, and I will soar with you;

Your Spirit leads me on—in the power of your love.

Lord, unveil my eyes; let me see you face to face,

The knowledge of your love as you live in me.

Lord, renew my mind—as your will unfolds in my life,

In living every day—by the power of your love.

(Chorus)

First Reading

Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² 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. ³ Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ ...They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

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.



*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 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, ² 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.” ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶ ‘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.’” ⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ 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.” ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

Epiphany: Christ Revealed to the World

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

“The First Noel” #229 Vv. 1-3

The first Noel, the angel did say,
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields were they—lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel—born is the King of Israel!

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east,
beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel—born is the King of Israel!

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far,
To seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow that star wherever it went.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel—born is the King of Israel!

COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People of God, as we journey through the season of Epiphany, we come each week to discover how Christ was revealed to the world. Christ came for us and for our salvation in love, wholeness, and holiness.

All: Our altar table is another place to encounter 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 make it for us communion with the living 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 and find the Light of Heaven—the Holy One who is the true light for our lives.

Communion Music

“As with Gladness”

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 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 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.

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.

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

“I Wonder as I Wander”

Cheryl and Sarah

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: Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with compelling dreams, and our journeys with unforgettable companions.

All: Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors with new wisdom, and those who bear profound and unexpected gifts. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn "Sing of God Made Manifest" #247

Sing of God made manifest—in a child robust and blest,
To whose home in Bethlehem—where a star had guided them,
Magi came and gifts unbound, signs mysterious and profound:
Myrrh and frank-in-cense and gold—grave and God and King foretold.

Sing of God made manifest—when at Jordan John confessed,
"I should be baptized by you—but your bidding I will do."
Then from heaven a double sign—dove-like Spirit, voice divine—
Hailed the true Anointed One: "This is my beloved Son."

Sing of God made manifest—when Christ came as wedding guest
And at Cana gave a sign, turning water into wine;
Further still was love revealed—as he taught, forgave, and healed,
Bringing light and life to all—who would listen to God's call.

Sing of God made manifest—on the cloud-capped mountain's crest,
Where the law and prophets waned—so that Christ alone remained:
Glimpse of glory, pledge of grace—given as Jesus set his face
Toward the waiting cross and grave, sign of hope that God would save.



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



The Second Sunday after Epiphany

Readings to Study:

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

John 1:43-51

Theme:

Called to Reveal Christ to the World

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

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