

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



October 27, 2024

16th Annual Diversity Sunday!

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!*

Welcome, Prayer Requests, and Announcements

Invocation:

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

All: And also with you.

One: People of God, we are part of the church universal—faithful people as many and diverse as the stars, and as colorful as the rainbow. We are gathered by God to be loved, and then, to go out into the world to love, serve, and stand up for justice!

All: We are an open and affirming church! Together let us worship God, rejoicing in the good news which we celebrate this day. Amen!

*Hymn

“Sing a New Church” #577

Summoned by the God who made us rich in our diversity,
Gathered in the name of Jesus, richer still in unity;

Chorus:

*Let us bring the gifts that differ and in splendid, varied ways,
Sing a new church into being, one in faith and love and praise.*

Radiant risen from the water; robed in holiness and light;
Many genders in God’s image, many genders God’s delight. *(Chorus)*

Bring the hopes of every nation; bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice; let it sound through time and space. *(Chorus)*

Draw together at one table all the human family;
Shape a circle ever wider and a people ever free. *(Chorus)*

***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.



Statement of Faith

One: People of God, what is the Word and Wisdom that we hear from the Sovereign Creator of the Universe?

All: This is the good news: There is a place in God's heart, there is a place at Christ's table, and there is a place here, and in every welcoming church, for all people. Faith is an illuminating guide, not a warden that imprisons the mind. Whatever is loving, just, compassionate, thoughtful, and healing—all these things are welcome here. Anyone who embodies such things shows forth the glory of God! Amen!

Song:

"Grace Alone" #436

Every promise we can make, every prayer and step of faith;
Every difference we will make—is only by his grace.
Every mountain we will climb, every ray of hope we shine;
Every blessing left behind—is only by his grace.

Chorus:

*Grace alone which God supplies;
Strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone,
We will go forth in grace alone.*

Every soul we long to reach, every heart we hope to teach;
Everywhere we share God's peace—is only by his grace.
Every loving word we say, every tear we wipe away;
Every sorrow turned to praise—is only by his grace.

(Chorus)

Children's Message

Diversity I: Migrants (Leviticus 19:33-34, NRSV)

One: People of God, one part of our identity as human beings is grounded in where we are from, where we are now, and why we find ourselves moving about on the earth.

All: All people are a migrant people when we trace the histories of our ancestors.

One: The scriptures consistently command followers of God to care for the immigrants in our midst. In the book of Leviticus we read, "*When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien...*

All: "...the alien who resides with you shall be to you as the native-born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Amen.

Song:

"Deportee"

Bob Martin

Diversity II: Genders (The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament)

One: In the beginning, God made humankind in God's image, male and female God created them. Totally equal. All holding a piece of the image of God within ourselves.

All: God's image is captured in the diversity of human gender, not in one form of it.

One: When we take the scriptures seriously, we find a hopeful story.

All: It is the story of God working to overcome the sins of sexism and patriarchy; and the story of God raising up women as leaders of the people of God.

One: We celebrate Sarah, through whom the generational promises of God manifested: a child, a priestly nation, and blessings to all the people of the world.

All: We celebrate Hagar, who was long marginalized, but was seen by God and was carried into a promise and story of her own—now remembered by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike.

One: We celebrate the prophetess Miriam, whose song of victory carried the Israelites onward beyond their captivity in Egypt.

All: We celebrate Deborah, the prophetess and great judge of Israel. By her wisdom and rule, the people went from warfare to decades of peace.

One: We celebrate Ruth and Naomi, who bound themselves together as a family to survive in a time of tragedy. Through their cunning and strength, the lineage of Israelite royalty would come from Ruth, the Gentile migrant, and Naomi her mother-in-law.

All: We celebrate Esther, who found herself in a time of national peril and persecution. She heeded the call to be God's agent of salvation "in such a time as this"—rising to become Queen and liberating her people.

One: We celebrate Elizabeth, who received the promise of the angel that her child would prepare the way of the Messiah.

All: We celebrate Mary, the mother of Christ; whose consent to birth the Messiah would set her forth as the mother of the Church—holding Emmanuel in her arms in infancy, and holding Emmanuel's lifeless body as he was lowered from the cross. Indeed, as Mary sang, all generations shall call her blessed.

One: We celebrate Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles—the first person to encounter the resurrected Christ and to proclaim the good news of the resurrection.

All: Inspired by these women, we stand for gender equality as a matter of our faith. We renounce sexism, patriarchy, and discrimination based on any gender bias. With Mary the Mother of Jesus we proclaim, "God has brought down the rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble." Amen!

Song:

"Bread & Roses"

Ensemble



Diversity III: People with Disabilities (John 9:1-3, NRSV)

One: We turn now to consider our abilities and disabilities. The scriptures teach us that all of us have different gifts and different abilities. But we often struggle with the question, “Why is there sickness, disability, and suffering on earth, especially if God is good and loving?”

All: Some people believe that anything (or anyone) unwell, or living with limitations, must be the result of sin. But this is not what we find in the teachings of Christ.

One: Remember the story from the Gospel of John: “*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.’*”

All: In this story, “God’s works” manifested in a miracle of restoring sight. But “God’s works” aren’t limited to physical healings. Even Jesus did not equate real faith with a life of only miracles.

One: “God’s works” come through all of us, and in many ways.

All: God’s hospitality works through us when we make buildings accessible for those who cannot walk.

One: God’s healing works through us when we make health care and treatment more available to people with different needs.

All: God’s blessings work through us when we tend to those who need our help.

One: And above all, God’s grace, love, and wisdom work through all of us, no matter how differently we are abled. May we live into this vision of living on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Amen!

Song: “Strong, Gentle Children” #629 Vv. 1, 3

Strong, gentle children, God made you beautiful,
Gave you the wisdom and power you need;
Speak in the stillness—all you are longing for;
Live out your calling to love and to lead.

Strong, knowing children, utter your cry aloud,
Honor the wisdom God gave you at birth;
Speak to your elders—till they have heard your voice;
Sing out your vision of healing on earth.



Diversity IV: Ethnic and Racial Diversities (Acts 17:24-28, The Message)

One: We have affirmed that all people are made in the image and likeness of God—all equal in value; all worthy of respect; all royal children of God.

All: And yet, through human sinfulness, we have too often perpetuated inequality, servitude, and prejudice on the basis of skin color, country of origin, and culture.

One: Lord have mercy! Christ have mercy! Lord have mercy!

All: Lord have mercy! Christ have mercy! Lord have mercy!

One: Listen to the truth of Scripture from the Book of Acts: *“Starting from scratch, God made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find God. God doesn’t play hide-and-seek with us. God is not remote; God is near. We live and move in him!”*

All: The God of all creation is the God of all people. The original blessing, “Let there be...” allowed all things to develop, grow, and change. Though we are one human race, our adaptations on the earth have created a colorful palette of humanity, and our cultures and languages have created beauty and richness upon the earth. Amen.

*Song: “For the Healing of the Nations” #621

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord,
For a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead your people into freedom, from despair your world release,
That, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how, through care and goodness, fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned;
Pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life’s brief span.

You, Creator-God, have written your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness, bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service—earth its destiny may find.



***Diversity V: LGBTQ+ (Luke 10:25-37, NRSV)**

²⁵ An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷ He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹ But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.” ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.

One: This is the Gospel of Christ for the People of God!

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

Homily

“The Samaritan as Saint”

Pastor Rich

Hymn

“Be Not Afraid” #430 Vv. 1, 3

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.

Chorus:

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

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!

(Chorus)



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

"A Beautiful Noise"

Shelly Conrad & Julie Lokahi

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] 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

God is inviting us to serve in response to God's great love for us, so that the whole world may know the fullness of God's peace.

How is God calling you this week to give of your time, talent, and resources?

Community United Church has the following ministries opportunities and needs:

Facility care and maintenance

Hospitality for socials and decorations

Prayer ministries

Food ministries: Liberty House & Service Sunday

Children's Church leaders

Financial gifts to cover monthly needs (every contribution helps so much)

Sanctuary decorating team

Every gift is great. Let us all give 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

Ministry of Music

“Seasons of Love”

Ensemble

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: You know us and search us by name, O God, and in your sight we have found favor.

All: Almighty God, as we glimpse your greatness, may we see your glory reflected in each one of us. For you have called and chosen all people to bear your image in the world. By your Spirit, may our witness be expressed with the contagious joy of your love. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“For the Children”

God, we gather as your people to raise our song above,
And we dare to claim the promise of your love.
Though the day may not yet be here,
We trust it soon will be
When your children will be free.

Chorus:

*Oh, may our hearts and minds be opened,
Fling the church doors open wide.
May there be room enough for everyone inside.
For in God there is a welcome, in God we all belong.
May that welcome be our song.*

Oh, we sing for all the children, that one day they be free;
And we sing for generations yet to be,
That they never have a reason to doubt that they are blessed.
May they, in your love, find rest.
(Chorus)

Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear and shame,
So afraid of who they are and whom they love.
May the message now be banished that your love is for the few;
May their faith in you renew.
(Chorus)

God, we're working for the future when children far and wide
Can live their lives with dignity and pride.
As they grow in strength and stature, may they join us hand in hand,
As against all hate we stand.
(Chorus)



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



Next Week: November 3, 2024

Sundays of Gratitude, Part 1:

All Saints & All Souls:

Grateful for Our Departed Loved Ones

Scriptures:

Isaiah 25:6-9

Revelation 21:1-6a

Psalm 24

John 11:32-44

***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



Community United Church

**The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by
Carol Rodgers in Memory of her father, Walter Kurty**

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 27: Praise & Prayer 9:00 AM
October 27: Diversity Sunday
October 27: Church & the Paranormal: 12:30 PM
October 27: Lake Erie Association Annual Fall Meeting: 3:00 PM
November 6: Supper & Study 6:30 PM
November 10: Pot Luck Dinner following Service

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY:

The Ladies Outreach Group is collecting FULL SIZED bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and body wash, as well as new or GENTLY USED bath towels. We will be donating the items to the Church of the Covenant where they have a women's shower ministry. We will collect the items through September and October.

Thank you for your support!

Need hearing assistance? We have four available units. 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), Samantha McHenry (Army), Brittany Duncan (Army), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Matthew Anderson (Army), Jaden O'Hara (Army) & Toby Charlton (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Diane Walker, Ralph Kester,
John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone,
Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich,
Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family,
Shirley Carrier, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt,
Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Sharon Cooper,
Josh Cook & Danny Kaerberlein, & The Vadzemnieks Family.

Council Members:

Debbie Anderson (President), Angel Conrad (VP), Nancy Alberico (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, Michele Vahey, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Bob Martin