

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



***Imagine Together:***

**A Series on Church Growth & Stewardship**

**February 16, 2025**

**11:00 AM**

**Pastoral Team:**

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music

“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is” #396

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is peace.  
Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love.  
There is comfort in life’s darkest hour,  
there is light and life, there is help and power  
in the Spirit, in the Spirit of the Lord.  
*(Repeat)*

Invocation

**One:** Gracious and generous God, you have called each one of us to this place. Each one here is unique, with differing talents, differing gifts, and differing skills. Be with us, we pray, as we embrace our abilities and look diligently for more ways to grow our ministries and embrace our Spiritual gifts.

**All: Help us to understand and appreciate what You have given us, O God, and reveal to us your purposes for this Church. Guide us as we gratefully receive Your strength, which enables us to build peace and cultivate hope. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn

“God is Here!” #1 Vv.1, 3, 4

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,  
May we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.  
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts  
Wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd’s flock and fold;  
Here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.  
Here, the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore  
What it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,  
Keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.  
Here, in this day’s dedication, all we have to give, receive;  
We who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

**\*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.

## First Reading

## The Apostle Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 12:1-14

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were gentiles you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord, <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. <sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

## Responsorial

Psalm 95:1-7

One: O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

**All: Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to the Holy One with songs of praise.**

One: For the LORD is a great God and a great Sovereign above all gods.

**All: O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand O that today you would listen to God's voice. 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 Lesson**

**Mark 12:41-44**

[Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup> Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup> For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

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

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

**Children’s Message**

Song of Preparation

“Let There Be Praise” #54

Let there be praise, let there be joy in our hearts.  
Sing to the Lord, give God the glory;

Let there be praise, let there be joy in our hearts.  
Forever more let God’s love fill the air, and let there be praise.  
*(Repeat)*



**Message**

*Imagine Together, Part 3:*  
***We Have Everything We Need***

Pastor Joy

Song of Response

“The Gift of Love” #397

Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,  
And have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,  
But not be given by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole  
Let inward love guide every deed; by this we worship, and are freed.

## COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People of God, our discernment for the future comes from Holy Wisdom, revealed to us in Christ.

**All: Our altar table is a powerful place to encounter the living Christ—who never tires of meeting us in the bread and in the cup. Here at this table, food for the body 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 we 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 as true light for our lives.

### Communion Music

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”

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 the continued growth of our church, for our shared discernment of who Spirit is calling us to be; and 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.**

## A Testimony of Praise for the Church

### 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?

*Many church growth leaders say that just 1% giving can be transformational. Please see the last page of the bulletin for planned giving ideas.*



*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](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*

Offering & Offertory

“For Your Splendor”

Julie Lokahi

***Praise God, from whom all blessing flow!  
Praise God, all creatures here below:  
Praise God above, you heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.***

\*Departing Prayer

**One:** Holy and Loving God, you lavish us with abilities and capabilities that we sometimes don't even recognize! Lead us onward, we pray, as your Holy Spirit encourages and nurtures the very essence of truth about who we are and what we offer.

**All:** **Help us in our quest to comprehend and utilize the spiritual gifts that lie within ourselves, so that through love and faith, we might go forward to accomplish the unimaginable greatness that comes only from You. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“We Are Called to Be God’s People” #580

We are called to be God’s people,  
Showing by our lives his grace,  
One in heart and one in spirit,  
Sign of hope for all the race.  
Let us show how he has changed us,  
And remade us as his own,  
Let us share our life together  
As we shall around his throne.

We are called to be God’s servants,  
Working in his world today;  
Taking his own task upon us,  
All his sacred words obey.  
Let us rise, then, to his summons,  
Dedicate to him our all,  
That we may be faithful servants,  
Quick to answer now his call.

We are called to be God’s prophets,  
Speaking for the truth and right,  
Standing firm for godly justice,  
Bringing evil things to light.  
Let us seek the courage needed,  
Our high calling to fulfill,  
That the world may know the blessing  
Of the doing of God’s will.



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



**Next Week:**

**Worship & Sermon Series:  
Imagine Together: Church Growth & Stewardship**

Readings to Study:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Psalm 24

Matthew 7:24-29

**Theme:**

***Imagine Together, Part 4:  
Manifesting our Future***

***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)





## Community United Church

**The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Nancy Alberico and in honor of all those with February birthdays! Happy Birthday, all!**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS IN FEBRUARY:**

February 2 – 23, 2025: *Imagine Together – Church Growth and Stewardship Series*  
February 16: Imagine Together, Part 3: We Have Everything We Need  
February 23: Imagine Together, Part 4: Manifesting our Future

February 19, 2025: *This week's midweek opportunities to connect, learn, serve, and worship*  
Resonate – 6:30 PM Pre-Service Social, 7:00 PM Service

**Special invitation:** The Ladies Outreach Ministry is sponsoring a winter items collection for the children at Grover Cleveland School. They will be collecting hats, scarves, and gloves for kids. The staff of the school also said that they are “*desperately in need of boots and winter appropriate shoes.*” The Ladies Outreach Ministry will collect items until February 16, 2025.

***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), 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:**

Pat Czytuck, 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, The Vadzemnieks Family, Reverend Susan Strouse & Reverend Barbara Peronteau, 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)



## **Imagine Together: A Rested Church/Community**

By Rev. Dr. Courtney Buggs

“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11: 28-30

Scant scholarship exists that addresses these verses. Still, the literary context of the passage supports exploration of traditional religion contrasted with the experience of Jesus’ Way. While the former way is depicted as stringent and laborious; the latter is referred to as easy and light.

The invitation is to those who 1) have grown weary from labor (or trouble); and 2) those who are bringing or carrying burdens. Figuratively, Jesus calls those who are fainting under the legal burdens of religion, those who feel burdened with their efforts to keep the laws of religion. The weariness may also be caused by sin or guilt for inability to adhere to the full Law. Moreover, the uncertainties of life might contribute to an arduous life experience.

Come to me and rest, that is, be refreshed, experience refreshment, be relieved. It is an invitation to cessation, interruption of that which causes unrest. This alone – come to me and rest – may cause readers to exhale! God’s Way brings relief from uncertainty and anxiety and sin and guilt. The invitation is not to idleness, but rather to companionship with God that leads to contentment, both in this present life, and life eternal. To suggest that this rest is limited to the eschaton is to deprive believers of Emmanuel, in this life. The rest of which Jesus speaks brings renewal and restoration.

*Imagine Together* how our congregation can promote the rest Jesus speaks about. What burdens can we ease? What can we make lighter?

## Curious about planned-giving?

As we consider our gifts of *time, talents, and resources*, the “resources” part has often been a difficult subject in churches. It goes without saying that some churches have approached finances from a place of shame or demand. We don’t do that. At Community United Church, we approach financial gifts as an invitation to help build the reign of God through our church. God doesn’t need money, but the world we live in requires us to work with it. So, following in the way of Christ, we invite people to give offerings of their own choosing—and from a place of faith and joy. Consider the guide below, prepared by the United Church of Christ, as you pray and think about planned giving for the year.

### CONSIDER YOUR PLEDGE AS A PERCENT OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

Annual Income	Monthly Income	2%	3%	4%	5%	10%
20,000	1,667	33	50	67	83	167
25,000	2,083	42	63	83	104	208
30,000	2,500	50	75	100	125	250
35,000	2,917	58	88	117	146	292
40,000	3,333	67	100	133	167	333
45,000	3,750	75	113	150	188	375
50,000	4,167	83	125	167	208	417
60,000	5,000	100	150	200	250	500
75,000	6,250	125	188	250	313	625
100,000	8,333	167	250	333	417	833
125,000	10,417	208	313	417	521	1042
150,000	12,500	250	375	500	625	1250
200,000	16,667	333	500	667	833	1667

On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of annual income to charity would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in our community.



**Imagine**  
Together