

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 6, 2026

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Love is in the Middle”

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Litany for Labor Day

One: As our nation commemorates Labor Day this year, let us remember that the call for labor justice is not only a civic value, but a spiritual value.

All: We remember the words of Moses to the people Israel, “You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal, and you shall not keep for yourself wages of a laborer until morning.”

One: We remember the words of Jesus, as he sent his disciples out to minister, “the laborer deserves to be paid.”

All: Let us always remember that there is dignity in our work. God created us to be co-creators who innovate, build, and grow. Believing that this is true, let us continue to advocate for justice in labor, here and everywhere. Amen.

Centering Music

“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” #587

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury your pardon, Lord,
And where there's doubt truth faith in you.

Chorus:

*O Master grant that I may never seek—
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness—only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy. *(Chorus)*

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.



Invocation

One: Gracious God, you meet us wherever we gather in your name.

All: You come into the space between us—between joy and sorrow, between hurt and healing, between disappointment and hope.

One: Teach us what it means to let love stand in the middle—where love strengthens the weary, softens our hearts, and makes this a place of courage, healing, and hope.

All: Inspire us, strengthen us, and align our desires with your will. Ignite our worship and transform our lives.

One: O God, breathe your love and your Spirit into this time of worship, center us in your love, and open us to your grace.

All: Amen!

*Opening Hymn

“God is Here” #1 v. 1,2,4

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

*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 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off^[a] the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Responsorial

Psalm 119:33-40

One: Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end.

All: Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

One: Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. Turn my heart to your decrees and not to selfish gain. Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; be gracious to me according to your word.

All: Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who fear you.

One: Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.

All: See, I have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness be gracious to me. 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 18:15-20

If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

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

"Seek Ye First" #349

Message

Love is in the Middle

Pastor Joy

Hymn 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.



Celebration of Communion

Pastor: Beloved children of God, come to the table with open hands and love in your hearts, for this is Christ's table—a place where every person is valued, treated with kindness, and embraced in fairness and love.

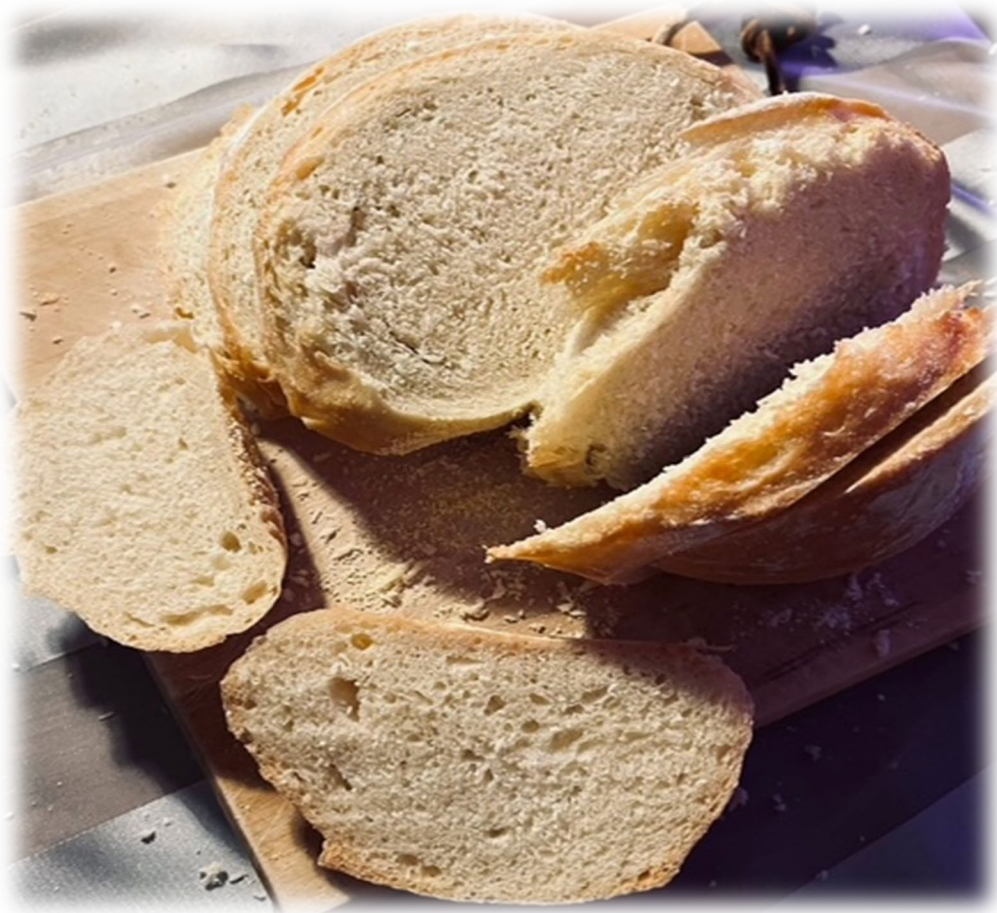
All: This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come. We come to the table as a people who are learning the way of Christ. We confess that we are not always right. But we share this faith: that those who trust in Christ Jesus will grow in the assurance of God's eternal love.

Pastor: And so, here at this table we take bread... and we take the 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



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 draw on the Holy Spirit's power within us. We bring forward now the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether they be joys or sorrows.... *(prayer requests are presented)*. We also pray for all who have asked to be on our printed 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 now 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

*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: Holy and Loving God, send us from this time to work in love.

All: **Let love guide our decisions and shape our actions.**

One: Keep us trusting that Christ is among us.

All: **May his love lead us in courage, mercy, and peace. Amen.**

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“Great is the Lord”

Great is the Lord, he is holy and just;
by his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord, he is faithful and true;
by his mercy he proves he is love.

Great is the Lord, and worthy of glory!
Great is the Lord and worthy of praise.
Great is the Lord; now lift up your voice,
Now lift up your voice:
Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!

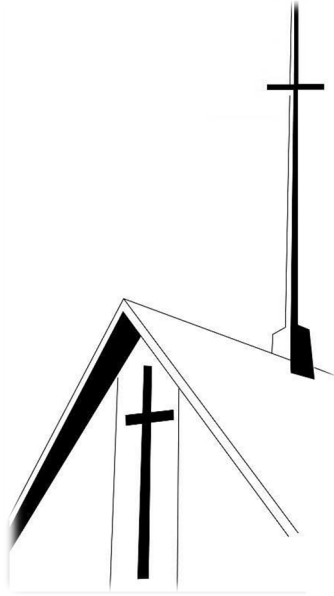
Great is the Lord, he is holy and just;
by his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord, he is faithful and true;
by his mercy he proves he is love.

Great are you, Lord, and worthy of glory!
Great are you, Lord, and worthy of praise.
Great are you, Lord; I lift up my voice,
I lift up my voice:
Great are you, Lord! Great are you, Lord!

*Until we meet again, remember: you are
loved.*

Postlude_____

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



**Next Week:
Sunday, September 13, 2026
11:00 AM**

Readings:
Romans 14:1-12
Psalm 103:1-7, 8-13
Matthew 18:21-35

Theme: The Freedom of Letting Go

***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 flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Ginnie Burger as well as Sean Leonard in memory of each of their mothers' birthdays.

*We thank you for sharing these flowers during the service
as we honor your mothers' birthdays and hold their memories with you.*

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Sept. 8: Liberty House Veterans' Ministry dinner –sign up to provide and/or participate!
Sept. 9: Spirits & Spirituality @ Calamari's Squid Row – Discussion starts at 7 PM
Sept. 10: Crafternoon—1:30 PM
Sept.15: Women's Outreach Group – 11 AM Community Building Conversations, 12 PM Luncheon

CUC Craft Show September 19th 9-2

***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, Veronica, Joan Schultz, Michelle and Melissa, Tom and Thea Hyatt,
Randy Koziol, Barbara Thompson, Tanisha and Jaeda, Barbara Hickey, Sandy Gool, Jim Haglund, Ruth Zavaglia,
Brad Stewart, Cain Hickey, Zoey Foote, Earl Hall, Patty Brogdan, friends and family of Rosie Goss, friends and
family of Marilyn Pease, Lynn Oliver, Rowan Oliver, and Katrina Strohmeyer.

Your 2026 Council Members:

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

We have 2 open Church Council Positions:

Council Member who serves as the liaison to the Worship Committee

Council Member who serves as the liaison to the Education Committee

See any council member, contact the Church Office or just ask somebody about it!

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:

CCLI Church Copyright License: 11405428 / Streaming License: 20856761

Please Join in CUC Community-Building Conversations

The Church Profile Committee requests your input as we develop Community United's Local Church Profile following a format recommended by the United Church of Christ.

A Local Church Profile is intended to strengthen the church and guide our future by assembling relevant data and discerning answers to key questions: WHO WE ARE NOW? WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR? WHO IS GOD LEADING US TO BECOME?

The first step in this work is a series of **Community-Building Conversations**. Here's what to know:

Who: You! Everyone in the congregation is encouraged to participate in one conversation session.

What: Community-Building Conversations are small-group discussions intended to collect your input and ideas. They're guided by *Grow Your Church*, a format developed by UCC. Participation is as simple as responding from your heart about the question you draw.

When: An initial round of Community-Building Conversations is scheduled after church on Sundays through September, except for Service Sunday September 20th. They begin at about 12:15 p.m. in the Education Room and last about an hour. Please choose a Sunday that works for you and add your name to the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. Six participants are invited to join each week.

What if I can't stay after church: Opportunities to participate in a Community-Building Conversation will be offered on additional days and times. Those conversations will be announced in September.

What else should I know: The conversations are confidential. Ideas and input will be collected without names attached. They'll be analyzed for common themes. Next steps — such additional discussions or surveys — will be determined by the Church Profile Committee in consultation with Church Council.

Questions: Please reach out to **Thea Hyatt, Becky Pomeroy** or another member of the Church Profile Committee:

Jeff Hileman
Ginnie Burger

Juli Tonks
Cheryl Sealy

Tracy Applebee Davis Amy DeYoung
Sean Leonard

If you would like to email: please write to any member, or any church person for that matter, at:

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com

and the message will be forwarded directly to whomever you wish!
All feedback is reviewed and is valuable!

Wanted: Part-Time Administrative Assistant

Are you organized, welcoming, and ready to support the life of the church?

Community United Church is seeking a part-time Administrative Assistant, about 15 hours per week, to help keep our church office organized, welcoming, and connected.

This role supports worship bulletins, church communications, records, office tasks, Council needs, and coordination with ministry teams and volunteers.

The right person will be a member or friend who attends CUC often, is detail-oriented, experienced with email and office software, kind in communication, and committed to discretion and confidentiality.

Interested? Send your letter of interest and resume to:

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com