

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



**The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**March 22, 2026**

**11:00 AM**

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy L. Johnson

Centering Music

“Nothing Can Trouble” #420

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.  
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
God alone fills us.  
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, we who live in space and time and mortality yearn for a day when life is not a struggle, hardships are far behind us, and life is unending grace, peace, and love.

**All: When we find ourselves feeling low in the valley of shadows, remind us, Christ Jesus, that you also experienced the pains of life and the sorrow of death. But remind us, also, that you are the crucified *and* risen one—and your promise is that we, too, will rise with you one day. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn

“You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd” #99

You, Lord, are both lamb and shepherd, you, Lord are both prince and slave.  
You, peacemaker and sword bringer—of the way you took and gave.  
You, the everlasting instant; you, whom we both scorn and crave.

Clothed in light upon the mountain, stripped of might upon the cross,  
Shining in eternal glory, beggared by a soldier’s toss,  
You, the everlasting instant; you, who are both gift and cost.

You, who walk each day beside us, sit in power at God’s side.  
You, who preach a way that’s narrow, have a love that reaches wide.  
You, the everlasting instant; you, who are our pilgrim guide.

Worthy is our earthly Jesus! Worthy is our cosmic Christ!  
Worthy your defeat and victory, worthy still your peace and strife.  
You, the everlasting instant; you, who are our death and life.

**\*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.

## Lenten Time of Confession

One: *Let us pray together:* Holy and loving God, as we walk closer to the cross and resurrection, we are mindful to turn from trying to control life and the life of others to enjoying it and serving others. When we have been too rigid, we pray:

**All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

One: For times we have not chosen love as our light and guiding path:

**All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

One: For times when the church universal has brought a sword and not healing:

**All: Almighty God, renew us once more to be your people, living by grace. Amen.**

## **Lenten Meditation & Candles**

Song of Reflection

“Jesus Remember Me” #285

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

*(Sing Three Times)*

## **First Reading**

## **The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel 37:1-14**

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. <sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

Song of Response

“Spirit of the Living God” #492 V. 1

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

*(Repeat)*

## Second Reading

## The Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Romans 8:6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed, it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through<sup>[e]</sup> his Spirit that dwells in you.

## Responsorial

## Psalm 130

One: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

**All: Holy One, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!**

One: If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, who could stand?

**All: But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.**

One: I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in God’s word, I hope.

**All: My soul waits for the Holy One more than those who watch for the morning.**

One: More than those who watch for the morning, my soul waits, for with the LORD there is steadfast love.

**All: With God there is great power to redeem. Amen!**

\*Lenten Acclamation

“Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights” #250 V. 1

Throughout these Lenten days and nights

We turn to walk the inward way,

Where meeting Christ, our guide and light,

We live in hope till Easter Day.



**\*Gospel****John 11:1-45**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup> After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup> Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup> Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of [the people] had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The [people] who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping and the [people] who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, "Where have you laid

him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." <sup>45</sup> Many of the [people], therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.

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 Response

"Cares Chorus" #493

I cast all my cares upon you,  
I lay all of my burdens down at your feet.  
And anytime that I don't know what to do—  
I will cast all my cares upon you.  
(Repeat)

Reflection

*Rising Again*

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God" #461 Vv. 1, 2, 4

Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew,  
That I may love whatever you love, and do what you would do.

Breathe on me breath of God, until my heart is pure,  
Until with you I will one will, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I never die,  
But live with you the perfect life of your eternity.



## COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People 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 the bread and we take the cup and we 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: Remembering that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. People of God, come to the table!

**Communion Music**

“Lead Me to Calvary”

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

*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.*

**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

Offertory

“River of Grace”

Julie Lokahi

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

\*Lenten Congregational Response #576

***Make me a servant, humble and meek.  
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak!  
And may the prayer of my heart always be:  
Make me a servant!  
Make me a servant!  
Make me a servant today!***

\*Departing Prayer

One: Holy and loving God, we have encountered the good news this morning that you do not abandon us in our sorrow—and from our sorrow, your Living Word speaks new life into our lives.

**All: By your grace we are given new life, through faith we trust your promises, and in serving others we experience the power of your love. Keep us on this path, now and always. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“I Surrender All” #474 Vv. 1, 3-4

All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live.

Refrain:

*I surrender all, I surrender all,  
All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender, make me, Savior, wholly thine;  
May thy Holy Spirit fill me, may I know thy power divine. *(Refrain)*

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to thee;  
Fill me with thy love and power, let thy blessing fall on me. *(Refrain)*

Postlude

Cheryl Strecker

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



**Next Week:**

**Sunday, March 29:  
Palm Sunday**

**Scriptures:**

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Matthew 21:1-11

**Theme:**

*Which Jesus Do We Welcome?*

***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 and in honor of Jacob and Beverly Say by the Thompson family***

**Next Sunday: Palm Sunday!**

### **Holy Week Worship:**

April 5: Maundy Thursday/Holy Thursday: Commemoration of the Last Supper (6:30 PM)  
April 6: Good Friday: Candlelight Commemoration of Christ's Death (8:00 PM)  
April 8: Easter Celebration: The Resurrection of Christ (11:00 AM)

***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)  
Zachary Oliver (PA Army National Guard), Aran Maloney (Air National Guard)

### **PRAYERS FOR:**

Linda Hilbert, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Ethel Davis, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Sharon Cooper, Sandra Ganley, Celeste Peck, Linda Foll Johnson, Shirley Carrier, The Kuzma Family, Debra Jackman, Zoey Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Paul Dietz, Kim Normandy, Joan Schultz, Mary Mong, Esmerelda Oliver

### **Your 2026 CUC Council:**

Thea Hyatt, President, Ginnie Burger, Vice President, Tracy Davis, Treasurer,  
Michele Vahey, Secretary (Interim), Justin Graff, Angel Conrad, Chuck Becker, Don Cameron

### **CUC IS LOOKING FOR A COUNCIL SECRETARY**

***We currently have an open position on the CUC Council and are looking for someone who can provide valuable support as Secretary and serve as a voting member. If you are interested, please speak with any Council member or contact the Church office. Thank you!***

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

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