

# Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



**The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**March 26, 2023:**

**11:00 AM**

# The Fifth Sunday in Lent

We are now in the Season of Lent. It is a six-week span in the church year when Christians contemplate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ—whose path ultimately led to death on a Cross. Within these six weeks, Christians are invited to fast and pray for 40 days—calling to mind Christ's 40 days in the desert, in which he wrestled with temptations of power. From the desert, Christ would come forth showing that the power of God is love. That love was put on ultimate display when Christ turned his own condemnation and death into forgiveness and new life.



## Today's Readings:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 130

John 11:1-45



## Theme:

## Coming Back to Life

### Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty, Senior Pastor

Pastor Joy Johnson, Associate Minister

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

Prelude

Cheryl Strecker

Welcome, Announcements, and Prayer Requests

Centering Music

“Worlds Apart”

Bob Martin & Patrick Vahey Jr.

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: Holy and loving God, you call us to remember that there is a time for everything, and to unite our living and our dying in the power of your grace.

**All: Remind us, once more, that you are both the Creator of the cycles of nature and the One who brings life from death—through Christ our Lord. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn

“Sing Praise to God” #56

Sing praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation,  
The God of power, the God of love, the God of our salvation.  
My soul with comfort rich he fills, and every grief he gently stills:  
*To God all praise and glory!*

What God’s almighty power has made, in mercy he is keeping;  
By morning glow or evening shade his eye is never sleeping.  
And where God rules in kingly might, there all is just and all is right:  
*To God all praise and glory!*

We sought the Lord in our distress: O God, in mercy hear us.  
Our Savior saw our helplessness and came with peace to cheer us.  
For this we thank and praise the Lord, who is by one and all adored:  
*To God all praise and glory!*

Let all who name Christ’s holy name give God the praise and glory.  
Let all who know his power proclaim—aloud the wondrous story.  
Cast every idol from its throne; the Lord is God, and he alone:  
*To God all praise and glory!*

**\*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 shake hands, hug, or simply acknowledge one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)*

## Confession

One: As the body of Christ, let us come before God with confidence. The Holy One of Heaven and Earth longs to meet us as we are—and always to restore us. *Let us pray:* For the ways in which our lives have missed the measure of love; we ask for a renewed sense of grace.

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

One: For the pain of death that we experience in this life—the loss of loved ones, the loss of certainty, the loss of relationships, and the loss of direction. God be our light and our true guide.

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

One: For the ways, known and unknown, that we participate in unjust systems, or in which we disturb order with chaos.

**All: Almighty God, with you there is great power to restore and redeem—be with us, and be with the world. May your Spirit be so present that we willingly turn our hearts towards you—until lasting peace abounds here and everywhere. Amen.**



## **Lenten Meditation & Candles**

Song of Reflection

“Jesus Remember Me” #285

*(Sing Three Times)*

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

## **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, “Prophecy 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.”

## Responsorial

## Psalm 130

One: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

**All: If you, O LORD should mark iniquities, who could stand? 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; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.

**All: O People of God, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with God is great power to redeem. It is God who will redeem the People from all our iniquities. Amen!**

\*Lenten Acclamation

“Surely the Presence” #131

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;  
I can feel his mighty power and his 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.



## \*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, [some of the people] 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 [their fellow Jewish 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 [fellow Jewish 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

[people] 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!**

Message

*Coming Alive Again*

Pastor Rich



Musical Reflection

"The Color Purple"

Bob Martin, Patrick Vahey Jr., Shelly Conrad

#### COMMUNION LITURGY

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

Cheryl Strecker

## **Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer**

One: The Lord be with you.

All: ***And also with you.***

One: *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 those who need God to be the life-giver from the pain of death, in all the ways we need it, and from all the kinds of death we experience.

All: **God hear our prayer!**

One: That we would be a people that not only honors the natural cycles of life, but that we would also learn to trust in the promises of God.

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.*

**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

## Ministry of Music and Time for Contemplation

Cheryl Strecker

***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.***

## **Offertory 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 of all consolation and compassion, as Christ comforted those in grief, and your breath brought life to dry bones and weary souls, pour that same consolation and compassion over us.

**All: And then in the assurance of your grace, help us to have true hope in what you have promised to us and to all—abundant life through the power of your living Word and Wisdom. Amen!**

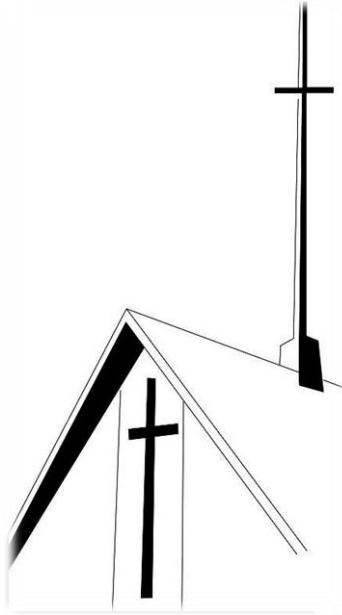
\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn                   “Let There Be Peace on Earth” #614

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;  
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.  
With God our creator, children all are we.  
Let us walk with each other—in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.  
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.  
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

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



**Next Sunday:**

**11:00 AM**

***Readings:***

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Matthew 21:1-11

**The Sixth Sunday of Lent:**

**Palm Sunday**

***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  
FROM SHELLY CONRAD**

**This week:**

- **Tuesday, March 28:** Ladies Lunch, 12:00 PM
- **Wednesday, March 29:** Midweek Bible Study, Dinner at 6:30 PM, Study at 7:00 PM

**Special Announcements:**

- **Sunday, April 2:** Palm Sunday
- **Thursday, April 6:** Maundy Thursday/Holy Thursday Last Supper Commemoration, 6:30 PM
- **Friday, April 7:** Good Friday evening service, 8:00 PM
- **Sunday, April 9:** Easter! Celebration of the Resurrection 11:00 AM
- **Sunday, April 16:** New Members and Baptism Sunday (Please talk to Pastors Rich & Joy if you would like to be a formal member or associate member, and/or to be baptized.)
- **Sunday, April 23:** Church Rally Day (before and after the worship service).



**WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:**

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army),  
Chris Duncan (Marines), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott  
(Army), Mathew Anderson (Army)  
and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

**PRAYERS FOR:**

Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett and family and friends, Rod and Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer,  
Diane Walker, George Churley,  
Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre,  
Laura Stone, Jared and Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski,  
Sally Cubetus, and Annette Minich.

**Council Members:**

***Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall***