

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2023

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music “Emmanuel, Emmanuel” #178

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called—Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us, his named is called—Emmanuel.
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, through prophets and angels you have made promises to the People of God—promises of deliverance, restoration, wholeness, and love.

All: As we enter the season of Advent, open our hearts to the mystery of how you ‘fully-fill’ your promises, on earth and in heaven. With all who have gone before us, we await your holy presence in our midst. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “Blessed Be the God of Israel” #158

Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,
Who visits and redeems us, and grants us liberty.
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;
God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace.

Now from the house of David a child of grace has come,
A Savior who will lead us to our eternal home.
Before him goes the herald, forerunner in the way,
The prophet of salvation, the harbinger of day.

On all by death imprisoned the sun begins to rise,
The dawning of forgiveness—upon our human eyes,
To guide the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace;
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!

***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 greet one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)

Advent Candles: Week I - HOPE

We invite all young people to come forward at this time to light our Advent candles!

Advent Song

“Wait for the Lord” #166

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart! *(Sing 3x)*

First Reading

The Second Book of Samuel 7:8-9, 12- 13, 16-17

⁸ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, ⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Responsorial

Psalm 22:25-31

One: From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who revere God.

All: The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek God shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!

One: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before God.

All: For dominion belongs to the LORD, and God rules over the nations. Future generations will be told about the Holy One and proclaim the deliverance of God to a people yet unborn, saying that the LORD has done it. Amen!

***Doxology**

“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*Luke 1:26-38**

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

*Waiting for the Coming King:
A Story of God's Promises to David and Mary*

Pastor Rich

Song of Response "Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn" #160

Awake! Awake and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born—behold! The Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
He opens wide the heavenly door and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing,
His humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing;
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving-kindness,
The thunder of his anthems roll to shatter all hatred and blindness.

In darkest night his coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,
As morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in wonder,
The weak be raised above the strong, and weapons be broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, through dark the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our endless story;
May God fill every day we share and bring us at last into glory.

Communion

Pastor: People of God, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Into Bethlehem we believe God manifested in Christ Jesus to be our living bread, to nourish us forever.

Pastor: In our time, and in our place, the celebration of Christ’s birth happens in the cold and darkness of winter.

All: The darkness requires us to seek out light, to see where we are going. The cold requires us to seek warmth for our very lives. Scripture and season both point to our need for communion with the One who can be our light, our warmth, and our food for life.

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 Christ who gave his life as the bread of heaven and as the cup of eternal life—and as the One who is the light in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome.

All: Here at this Table we remember that Christ was born into the world to be an outpouring of God’s Love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.

Pastor: Beloved of God, come to the Table and receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Life.

Communion Music

“December Prayer”

Bob Martin & Cheryl Strecker

Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s Prayer (“Debts and Debtors”)

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*] 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

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.

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.

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, which can be addressed to the church at:
1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music

“O Come, Emmanuel”

Bob Martin & Cheryl Strecker

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*Congregational Response #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: Holy and loving God, in your promises to David and Mary, you invite us to consider that the fulfillment of your Word is in mysterious and unexpected ways.

All: **May our whole lives be open to such mystery! May our faith be defined by openness and delight in the unexpected. And may we always find Jesus revealed in the lives of everyone we love and serve. Amen!**

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates” #176

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates:
Behold the King of glory waits!
The King of kings is drawing near,
The Savior of the world is here.

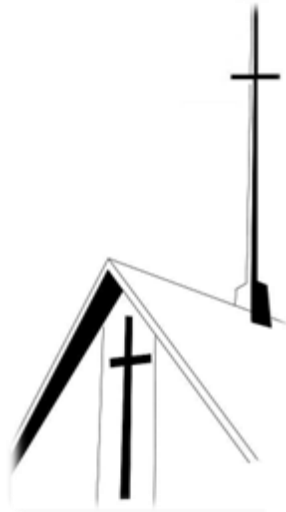
Fling wide the portals of your heart:
Make it a temple set apart—
From earthly use for heaven’s employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer come! I open wide!
My heart to you: here, Lord, abide!
Let me your inner presence feel:
Your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign, enter in!
Let new and nobler life begin!
Your Holy Spirit guide us on,
Until the glorious crown be won.



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



Next Sunday, December 10, 2022:

11:00 AM

The Second Week of Advent:

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Mark 1:1-8

Theme:

*Prepare the Way of the Lord –
John the Forerunner of Christ*

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect
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 in remembrance of Dina's Dad.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 3: 1st Sunday of Advent (Children to light candles)
December 6: Supper & Study 6:30 PM
December 11: Council Meeting 6:30 PM
December 12: Spirits & Spirituality – Calamari's 7:00 PM

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:

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), DJ Miaczynski (Marines), Jaden O'Hara (Army)
& Toby Charlton (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Karis Fenton, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett & family & friends, Rod & Dew Johnson,
Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer, Diane Walker, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester,
John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone,
Ron Celeski, Jan & Tim Crowe and Family, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich,
Dave Pikulski, Randi Johnson, Lillian Hendrickson, Wilma and Janice Skelly, Ethel Davis,
Jim Haglund, Chelsea Brown, John Waid, Patti Rogers, Celeste Eller & Family, Shirley Carrier,
Dave Wooledge, Ev Smith

Council Members:

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