

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



August 30, 2026

The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Let Love be Genuine: The Courage to Follow”

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Centering Music

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" #344

I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me,
The world behind me, the cross before me.
The world behind me, the cross before me.
No turning back, no turning back.

Invocation

One: God of path and purpose, you gather us into your holy presence this day.

All: Open our hearts to hear your call, even when the road ahead looks difficult.

One: Jesus, our Teacher, align our hearts with your way.

All: Inspire us to choose courage over comfort and align our desires with your will.

One: Holy Spirit, breathe unity into this sanctuary. Ignite our worship and transform our lives.

All: Come, Holy Spirit! Knit us together as the body of Christ, ready to serve and eager to follow. Amen!

***Opening Hymn**

"Christ Be My Leader" #453

Christ be my leader by night as by day;
safe through the darkness, for he is the Way.
Gladly I follow, my future his care;
Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

Christ be my teacher in age as in youth,
Drifting or doubting for he is the Truth.
Grant me to trust him; though shifting as sand,
Doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

Christ be my Savior in calm as in strife;
Death cannot hold me for he is the Life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
Can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.

***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

Isaiah 51:1-6

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ Instead, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Responsorial

Psalm 26:1-8

One: Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

All: Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.

One: I hate the company of evildoers and will not sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling all your wondrous deeds.

All: O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell and the place where your glory abides. 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 16:21-28

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^[a] to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

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

"Step by Step" #494

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.
O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.
I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways;
And step by step you'll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.
(repeat)

Message

Let Love Be Genuine: The Courage to Follow

Pastor Joy

Hymn of Response

"Just a Closer Walk with Thee" #504

I am weak, but thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to thee.

Refrain

Just a closer walk with thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to thee:
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

Through this world of toil and snares,
If I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.
(Refrain)

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

"Oceans – Where Feet May Fail"

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 they be joys or sorrows...[*prayer requests are presented*]...We also pray for everyone who has asked their name to be on the prayer list [*see list in 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 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

"Find Us Faithful" (#497)

Dina Johnson

O may all who come behind us find us faithful;
May the fire of our devotion light their way.
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe,
And the lives we live inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us find us faithful.

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: Christ calls us to follow with courage and love.

All: Lead us, Jesus, step by step.

One: Show us the path of mercy, faithfulness, and peace.

All: Send us to walk in your love as Christ moves in our lives, changes our hearts, and directs our feet. Amen!

***Blessing**

***Closing Hymn**

“Lift High the Cross” v.1,3,4

Refrain

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
Till all the world adore his sacred name.

Come, Christians, follow where our Savior trod,
Our King victorious, Christ, the Son of God.

(Refrain)

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
Your death has brought us life eternally.

(Refrain)

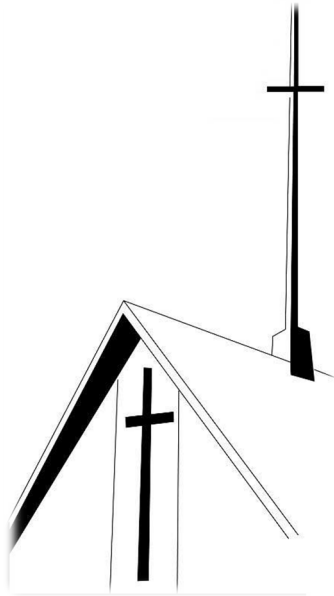
So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory.

(Refrain)

*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 6, 2026
11:00 AM**

Readings:
Romans 13:8-14
Psalm 119:33-40
Matthew 18:15-20

Theme: Love is in the Middle

***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 altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Ginnie Burger in honor of Ginnie and Jeff's 41st wedding anniversary. Congratulations!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

August 30: Community Building Small Group Activity after Service Today! If you haven't signed up for an upcoming session yet, please do so. It is fun and engaging!

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

SAVE THE DATE: CUC Craft Show September 19th

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, family and friends of Lorre Rapp, 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, Katrina Strohmeier,

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!