

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



**The Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**March 30, 2025:**

**11:00 AM**

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Prelude

“Morning Train”

Cheryl Strecker,  
Julie and Chris Moore and Bob Martin

Welcome & Announcements

Centering Music

“How Majestic Is Your Name” #42

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

O Lord, we praise your name. O Lord, we magnify your name:

Prince of Peace, Mighty God, O Lord God Almighty.

*(Repeat)*

### Invocation

**One:** Holy and loving God, the scriptures declare that ‘morning by morning’ we can experience your mercies. Every day is an opportunity to be held by your love.

**All:** **By your grace, you make us to be Ambassadors of Christ, not because we are perfect, but because you have called us all home. In your grace, you always come running to us, even when we are a long way off. By your grace, we are yours. By your grace we worship you. Through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you, one with the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn

“Tell Out, My Soul!” #41 Vv. 1-2, 4

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!

Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;

Tender to me—the promise of God’s Word;

In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of God’s name!

Make known God’s might, the deeds God’s arm has done;

God’s mercy sure, from age to age the same;

God’s holy name, the Lord, the Mighty one.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of God’s Word!

Firm is God’s promise, and God’s mercy sure.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord

To children’s children and forevermore!

**\*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.

## Confession

One: Holy and loving God, for times when we have turned away from justice, kindness, and humility, we pray:

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

One: For times when we have not been a shield of mercy for the oppressed, we pray:

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

One: Jesus, you call us to live on earth as it is in heaven, with divine love and wisdom.

**All: Empower us, O God, that being so one with you, our entire lives are transformed into embodiments of grace and mercy. 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 Apostle Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians 5:16-20**

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God.

## **Responsorial**

### **Psalm 32**

One: Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

**All: Let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.**

One: You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

**All: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. 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

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus].<sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”<sup>3</sup> So [Jesus] told them this parable: There was a man who had two sons.<sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them.<sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living.<sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need.<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.<sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything.<sup>17</sup> But when he came to his senses he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!’<sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”<sup>19</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.<sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.<sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate,<sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.<sup>25</sup> “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.<sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.<sup>27</sup> He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’<sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.<sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’<sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.<sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’ ”

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

“You Are My All in All” #427

You are my strength when I am weak,  
You are the Treasure that I seek,  
You are my All in All!  
Seeking you as a precious jewel,  
Lord, to give up I'd be a fool,  
You are my All in All!

Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is your name.  
Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is your name.  
*(Repeat all)*

Message

**The Mercy of God and New Beginnings**

Pastor Rich



Song of Response

“Amazing Grace!” #422 Vv. 1-4

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

## 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

“All My Troubles”

Cheryl, Julie, Chris & Bob

### Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

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 that is 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 the last page of the bulletin]*. Holy and loving God, in your wisdom, meet all of these needs in the perfect way of your grace. We 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 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.

***Planned-giving of even 1% can be transformational!***

**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

How is God calling you this week to give of your time, talent, and resources?

### *Volunteer Opportunities:*

- Liberty House: Meal share with U.S. Veterans
- Service Sunday: Bagged lunches for our neighbors in need
- Ladies Outreach Ministry
- Prayer Ministries
- Children's Church: We always are in need of teachers and helpers
- Instrumental or vocal music offerings
- Lector and worship assistance
- House and Grounds team
- Hospitality and Events

### *Financial Opportunities:*

- Planned weekly or monthly gifts
- Donating altar flowers, candles, and other church supplies

## **Offertory**

“Blowin’ In the Wind”

Cheryl, Julie, Chris & Bob

## **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, your daily mercies restore us. You delight in running to where we are, to meet us with a welcome that has no end.

**All: May we become more like you in all ways. May mercy become our virtue and grace the content of our hearts. And as we continue to journey with Christ to the cross, may always remember that such mercy and grace have been shown to each one of us—and in these, we are secure forever. Amen!**

\* Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“Great is Thy Faithfulness” #72

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with thee;  
Thou changest not, thy compassion they fail not;  
As thou has been, thou forever wilt be.

Chorus:

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed thy hand hath provided—  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*(Chorus)*

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*(Chorus)*





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



**Next Sunday:**

**11:00 AM**

***Readings:***

Isaiah 43:16-21

Philippians 3:10-14

Psalm 126

John 12:1-8

**The Fifth Sunday of Lent:  
Prodigal Praise**

***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 memory of Kathy Koziol's father's birthday!**

### **THIS WEEK:**

April 2: Bible Study, Fellowship Hall, 6:30 PM (if able, bring a snack to share)

### **REMINDERS:**

- **Easter Flowers** (Lillie, Tulips, and Hyacinths) sign-up today and next Sunday. \$8.50 per potted arrangement. Payment requested at signup.
- The Women's Outreach Ministry is still **collecting hairbrushes** for the Overnight Shelter.
- Need **hearing assistance**? We have four available units. Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.
- Have you signed up for **Small Group discussion** opportunities to continue our discernment for **church growth and stewardship**? See signup sheet in the Fellowship Hall.

### **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)

### **PRAYERS FOR:**

Darek Baksik, Laura Will, Keith Vargeson, Joyce Kneidel, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Linda Foll-Johnson, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Josh Cook & Danny Kaeberlein, Helena Burgos, The Vadzemnieks Family, Doug Moore, and John & Tina Schnarrs

### **Current Council Members:**

Mike Pruzinsky (President), Debbie Anderson (Vice President), Melanie Vadzemnieks (Treasurer), Nancy Alberico (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Angel Conrad, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, and Mark Davis

Need to contact our Council President? Please email at: [mpruzinsky@icloud.com](mailto:mpruzinsky@icloud.com)

Community United Church is committed to ethical and legal compliance in our music and livestreaming:  
CCLI Church Copyright License: 11405428 Streaming License: 20856761