

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 26, 2025

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music

“All Hail King Jesus!” #92

All hail King Jesus! All hail Emmanuel,
King of kings, Lord of lords, Bright Morning Star.
And throughout eternity, I'll sing your praises;
And I'll reign with you throughout eternity. *(Repeat)*

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, you make us in your image and likeness. You do so with the blessing and responsibility that we should be free in our choices and actions. Guiding us to freely choose the good, your Spirit inspires us; nature, reason, and experience inform us, and the scriptures reveal your love and grace.

All: As we gather to worship you, O God, and as we listen for your still-speaking Voice, open our hearts and minds to know the presence of your Spirit. Living Christ, meet us in our contemplation of the scriptures and at your table. Grant us understanding to perceive your truths, so that we might join in your loving mission of liberating all who are oppressed. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness” #93

Praise the One who breaks the darkness with a liberating light.
Praise the One who frees the prisoners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the gospel, healing every dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands with the very bread of peace.

Praise the One who blessed the children with a strong yet gentle word.
Praise the One who drove out demons with a piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water to the desert's burning sand.
From this well comes living water—quenching thirst in every land.

Praise the one true love incarnate: Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose for many that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness, seeing what our God has done.
Praise the one redeeming glory; praise the One who makes us one.

***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.

First Reading

The Book of Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. ² Accordingly, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. ³ He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ⁸ So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD, and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Responsorial

Psalm 19

One: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple.

All: The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes.

One: The reverence of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

All: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. 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

Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Children's Message



Song of Preparation

"Jesus, Your Name" #361

Jesus, your name is power, Jesus, your name is might.
Jesus, your name will break every stronghold,
Jesus, your name is life.

Jesus, your name is healing, Jesus, your name gives sight.
Jesus, your name will free every captive,
Jesus, your name is life.

Jesus, your name is holy, Jesus, your name brings light.
Jesus, your name, above every other,
Jesus, your name is life.

Song of Response

"Seek Ye First" #349

Seek ye first the kingdom of God—and its righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you;
Allelu, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find,
Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you;
Allelu, alleua!



COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People of God, as we journey through the season of Epiphany, we come each week to discover how Christ was revealed to the world. Christ came for us, and for our salvation into wholeness and holiness.

All: Our altar table is another place to encounter the living Christ—who meets us once again in the bread and in the cup. Here at this table, food for the body also becomes food for the spirit.

Pastor: This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come.

All: We come to the table as 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 we ask the Holy Spirit to make it for us communion with the living Christ, body and blood, love poured out, forever!

All: Here at this Table we remember that Christ indeed 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 and find the Light of Heaven as true light for our lives.

Communion Music

"Here I Am, Lord"

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.

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

Community United Church has the following ministries opportunities and needs:

Prayer ministries

Food ministries: Liberty House & Service Sunday

Children's Church leaders

Financial gifts to cover monthly needs (every contribution helps so much)

Every gift is great. Let us all give 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

Offering & Offertory

"Be the One"

Leah Johnson

Offertory 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: In you, O God, we find our joy, for through your law and your prophets you formed a people in mercy and freedom, in justice and righteousness.

All: Pour your Spirit upon us today, that we who are Christ’s body may bear the good news of your ancient promises to all who seek you. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Christ, You Call US All to Service” #571

Christ, you call us all to service, call us all who follow you;
Plant in us a deep commitment all your work and will to do.
Fire a passion for your justice, in us kindle love of peace;
Help us heal the brokenhearted, to the captive bring release.

Teach us how to work together, brothers, sisters, side by side,
Equal partners in the struggle, in the cause of truth allied.
To each one some gift is given, man or woman, young or old;
Help us use each skill and talent—your great purpose to unfold.

Let us be a servant people, reconciling, ending strife,
Seeking ways more just of sharing and of ordering human life.
Fill us with a glowing vision of this world as it should be;
Send us forth to change that vision into blest reality.

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



Next Week:

New Worship & Sermon Series: *February 2 – 23, 2025*

Imagine Together: Church Growth & Stewardship

Readings to Study:

Ephesians 3:14-21

Psalm 37:3-7

Matthew 7:7-11

Theme:

Imagine Together, Part 1:

Dare to Dream

***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.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN FEBRUARY:

- February 2 – 23, 2025: *Imagine Together – Church Growth and Stewardship Series*
February 2: Imagine Together, Part 1: Dare to Dream
February 9: Imagine Together, Part 2: Discerning the Vision
February 16: Imagine Together, Part 3: We Have Everything We Need
February 23: Imagine Together, Part 4: Manifesting our Future
- Midweek Opportunities to Connect, Learn, Serve, and Worship*
February 5, 2025: 6:30 PM: Bible Study in the Fellowship Hall
February 12, 2025: 6:30 PM: Spirits & Spirituality (location, TBD)
February 19, 2025: 7:00 PM: Resonate (doors open at 6:30 PM for pre-service social)
February 25, 2025: 12:00 PM: Ladies Outreach Ministry Lunch

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), Samantha McHenry (Army), Brittany Duncan (Army), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Matthew Anderson (Army), Jaden O'Hara (Army), Toby Charlton (Marines), Cole Poshett (Army) & Hunter Miaczynski (Army)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Diane Walker, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Shirley Carrier, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Sharon Cooper, Josh Cook & Danny Kaeberlein, The Vadzemnieks Family, Reverend Susan Strouse & Reverend Barbara Peronteau, and John & Tina Schnarrs

Current Council Members:

Debbie Anderson, Angel Conrad, Nancy Alberico, Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, Michele Vahey, Melanie Vadzemniek, Justin Graff, and Mark Davis (new officer elections forthcoming)