

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



July 16, 2023

Summer Sermon Series:

Renewal and Reform *is* the Path of Faith

Part 3: The Future of Church

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Centering Music

“I Love You, Lord” #85

I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice—
To worship you, O my soul, rejoice!
Take joy, my King, in what you hear:
May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear.
(Sing twice)

Invocation to Worship

One: Holy and loving God, your Spirit has gathered us together to offer you our praise—
and to be transformed by your living wisdom and your abundant grace.

**All: Before your holy presence we ask: grant us better understanding of your
eternal reign, so that we might fully embody it, here and everywhere. Amen!**

*Opening Song

“Great is the Lord” #50

*Great is the Lord, he is holy and just;
By his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord, he is faithful and true;
By his mercy he proves he is love.*

Great is the Lord and worthy of glory!
Great is the Lord and worthy of praise.
Great is the Lord; now lift up your voice,
Now lift up your voice:
Great—is the Lord!
Great—is the Lord!

*Great is the Lord, he is holy and just;
By his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord, he is faithful and true;
By his mercy he proves he is love.*

Great are you, Lord, and worthy of glory!
Great are you, Lord and worthy of praise.
Great are you, Lord; I lift up my voice,
I lift up my voice:
Great—are you, Lord!
Great—are you, Lord!

***Opening Prayer**

First Reading

The Book of Acts 2:1-4, 43-47

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Song of Reflection “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” #489

Lord, listen to your children praying—Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
Send us love, send us power, send us grace.

(Sing 3x)

A Meditation on Acts 2

One: In our first reading today, we are offered a glimpse of what the first generation of the church was like. Two thousand years later, we are their legacy. Do we see ourselves reflecting their core ministries?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: When the Holy Spirit first came upon the apostles and disciples, they were able to speak in tongues and languages so that others could understand the good news of Jesus Christ. Sometimes ‘speaking in tongues’ means finding new ways to communicate. How might we, as a church, find new ways to communicate so that more people can encounter the goods news of Christ?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: To be the church is to be the Body of Christ. That requires all of us. Listen for the Spirit to speak, now—how is God calling *you* to embody the power and grace of Christ, in this church?

[Pause for silent reflection]

One: For two thousand years, the ministries of the Body of Christ have been at work to reveal the Reign of God—on earth as it is in heaven. These are our days, and God is inviting us to do such work. Let us rise, now, in spirit or body to prepare our hearts to hear Christ’s command: to go out into the world as his loving presence.

***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 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message Renewal and Reform is the Path of Faith, Part 3: The Future of Church

A Responsive Reading on the Life of the Church

(From “A Prayer of Oscar Romero”)

One: It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.

All: Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection.

One: No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

All: This is what we are about: we plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

One: We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

All: We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

One: It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

All: We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

One: We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

All: We are prophets of a future that is not our own. Amen.

Song of Response

“Sing a New Church” #577

Summoned by the God who made us—rich in our diversity,
Gathered in the name of Jesus, richer still in unity.

Chorus:

*Let us bring the gifts that differ and in splendid varied ways,
Sing a new church into being, one in faith and love and praise.*

Radiant risen from the water; robed in holiness and light.
Many genders in God’s image, many genders God’s delight. *(Chorus)*

Trust the goodness of creation; trust the Spirit strong within.
Dare to dream the vision promised spring from seed of what has been. *(Chorus)*

Bring the hopes of every nation; bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice; let it sound through time and space. *(Chorus)*

Draw together at one table all the human family;
Shape the circle ever wider and a people ever free. *(Chorus)*

Celebration of Communion

Pastor: People of God, come to the table!

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: Jesus said to his disciples, “*my peace I leave you, my peace I give you.*” Open your hearts now—and may the peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Before we come to the table, let us share with one another a sign of peace.

(All are welcome to show a sign of peace with one another, in their own way)

Pastor: Together, now, let us bless the elements. 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

“Draw Me Into Your Presence”

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] 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.

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

"Down to the River to Pray"

Vocal Ensemble

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.

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, you are calling us to reform and renew our lives at Community United for the sake of bringing Christ's Gospel to the world in fresh new ways.

All: Open our hearts and minds so that we might discern where you are leading us. Grant us the courage to make all things new, for the sake of all who need the assurance of your liberating grace. Amen!

***Blessing**

***Closing Song**

"Grace Alone" #436

Every promise we can make,
Every prayer and step of faith;
Every difference we will make—is only by his grace.
Every mountain we will climb,
Every ray of hope we shine;
Every blessing left behind—is only by his grace.

Chorus:

*Grace alone, which God supplies;
Strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone,
We will go forth—in grace alone.*

Every soul we long to reach,
Every heart we hope to teach;
Everywhere we share his peace—is only by his grace.
Every loving word we say,
Every tear we wipe away;
Every sorrow turned to praise—is only by his grace.

(Chorus)

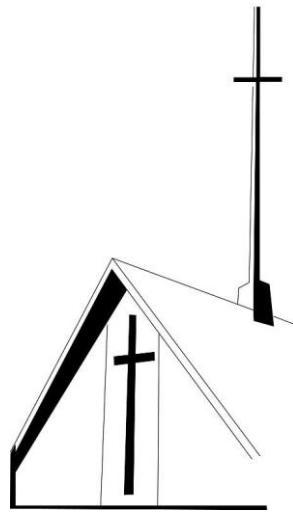


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday - July 23, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

“Wheat and Weeds”

Scripture for Study:

Isaiah 44:6-8

Psalm 86:11-17

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

***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 Carol Rodgers
in Memory of Walter Kurty**

Along with many in the Erie community, we remember Blossom McBrier who passed away last week at the age of 99. She was a friend to many, and a friend of this church. We pray for her family and friends in their time of mourning.

Please consider signing up for our prayer ministry. This is not a prayer chain, nor another meeting or committee. We simply ask for those who are interested to email communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com and let us know if we can email you prayer requests for the church. It will not become a group email chain, nor a discussion group. It is simply (but importantly) an opportunity to pray for the life and ministries of Community United Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- July 16: Service Sunday
- July 19: Resonate 7 PM
- July 20: Art Show – Icons, Iconography & Mythology 5:30-10 PM
- July 25: Ladies Lunch 12:00 noon

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), Chris Duncan (Marines), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Matthew Anderson (Army) and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett & family & friends, Rod & Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Schweiwer, Diane Walker, George Churley, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Jared & Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski, Sally Cubetus, Jan & Tim Crowe and Family, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich and Dave Pikulski.

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