

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



July 9, 2023

Summer Sermon Series:

Renewal and Reform *is* the Path of Faith
Part 2: Love and Spirit Overcoming Convention

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

“As We Gather” #646

As we gather may your Spirit work within us,
As we gather may we glorify your Name.
Knowing well that as our hearts begin to worship,
We'll be blessed because we came—
We'll be blessed because we came.

(Sing twice)

***Invocation to Worship**

One: Holy and loving God, we come to worship you because you first came to us with irresistible grace and unconditional love.

All: Remind us, in this time of worship, that your Spirit leads us beyond convention and into the wild fields of liberating love—especially through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Friend. Amen!

*Opening Song

“Joyful, Joyful” #59

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother—all who live in love are thine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;
Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all within its span.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

***Opening Prayer**

First Reading

The Book of Acts 10:1-36

In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. ² He was a devout man who revered God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. ³ One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." ⁴ He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; ⁶ he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside."

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had left, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, ⁸ and after telling them everything he sent them to Joppa. ⁹ About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while it was being prepared he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." ¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. ¹⁷ Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸ They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. ²⁰ Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation, for I have sent them."

[Peter went with the men back to the place where Cornelius was]; and Peter went in and found that many had assembled, ²⁸ and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is improper [by religious law] for a Jew to associate with or to visit an outsider, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. I truly understand [now] that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every people anyone who reveres God and acts justly is acceptable to God. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all."

Song of Reflection

"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

(Sing twice)

Meditation on Acts 10

One: Imagine being the apostle Peter. You were raised your whole life to believe that it is wrong to eat certain animals, and that it is necessary to stay apart from certain people who are not like you. And now imagine hearing God tell you: nothing is unclean to eat, and all people are in the care of God. How would you respond? Would you resist at first, like Peter, or shift swiftly into change?

[Reflect in silent contemplation]

One: In our daily lives, there are a lot of voices speaking at us, and to us. How do we discern when it is the voice of God? How might our first reading today help us sort out the many voices that claim to be “from God?”

[Reflect in silent contemplation]

One: The apostle Peter had to take a courageous step of faith to pivot from the conventions of his established traditions to a larger vision of the Reign of God. How might God be calling us to have such a “larger vision” in our time?

[Reflect in silent contemplation]

One: Let us turn and sing once more our song of reflection, now as a prayer to God—asking for the faith we need to step into the larger vision of the Reign of God. As you are able, rise in spirit or body to sing, and remain standing for the Gospel lesson.

*Song of Reflection

“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

(Sing twice)

*Gospel

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

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 2:

Love and Spirit Overcoming Convention

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

“One Bread, One Body” #689

Chorus:

*One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth,
We are one body in this one—Lord.*

Gentile or Jew, servant or free,
Woman or man—no more.

(Chorus)

Many the gifts, many the works,
One in the Lord—of all.

(Chorus)

Grain for the fields, scattered and grown,
Gathered to one—for all.

(Chorus)

Celebration of Communion

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: 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

“At This Table”

Bob Martin

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

"Bless the Beasts and the Children"

Bob Martin

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 call us to widen the scope of our vision to perceive that the territory of your Reign has no end; and the shape of your love is as deep as it is wide.

**All: Transformed by this vision, send us out into the world to be ambassadors and message-bearers of your good news: all are loved, and all will be made well.
Amen!**

***Blessing**

***Closing Song**

“Here I am, Lord” #559

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin—my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus:

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain.
I have wept for love of them, they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my Word to them.
Whom shall I send?
(Chorus)

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them—my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?
(Chorus)

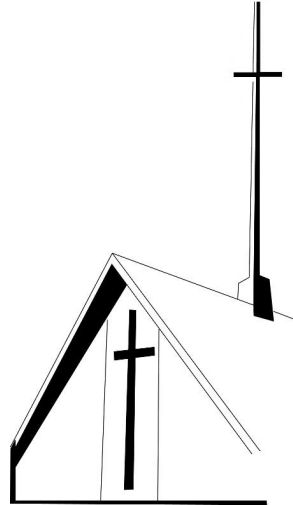


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday - July 16, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Summer Sermon Series!

Renewal and Reform is the Path of Faith

Part 3, July 16: *The Future of Church*

Acts 2:1-4, 43-47 and Matthew 28:26-20

***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 Kathy Koziol in celebration of 43 years of marriage.

We celebrate the baptism of Camden Avery Lee, grandchild of George and Susan Currie, who was baptized on July 4, 2023.

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 12: Spirits & Spirituality 7 PM
- July 16: Service Sunday
- July 19: Resonate 7 PM
- July 20: Art Show – Icons, Iconography & Mythology 5:30-10 PM

Please take a new calendar card from the table. The new one has the correct dates on it.

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.