

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



June 29, 2025

The Third Sunday after Pentecost

*Open & Affirming Ministries
for the Erie Pride Parade Day*

9:30 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Richard W. McCarty & Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Ensemble

One: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

*Songs of Praise “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above” #56 Vv. 1, 3

Sing praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of love, the God of our salvation.
My soul with comfort rich God fills, and every grief he gently stills:
To God all praise and glory!

We sought the Lord in our distress; O God, in mercy hear us.
Our Savior saw our helplessness and came with peace to cheer us.
For this we thank and praise the Lord, who is by one and all adored:
To God all praise and glory!

“Majesty” #43

Majesty, worship his majesty; unto Jesus be all glory, honor, and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority—flow from his throne, unto his own, his anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus; magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.
Majesty, worship his majesty; Jesus, who died, now glorified, King of all kings.
(Repeat)

***Opening Prayer**

“We Exalt Thee” #47

For thou, O Lord, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all gods.
For thou, O Lord, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all gods.
We exalt thee, we exalt thee, we exalt thee, O Lord.
We exalt thee, we exalt thee, we exalt thee, O Lord.
(Repeat)

Approaching Scripture

One: Today, our assigned readings have us reflect on the power of God. In particular, they have us reflect on what human beings *want to do* with the power of God. Our first reading is from the Hebrew Bible (or, Old Testament). It tells the story of the Prophet Elijah—who was known for manifesting the power of God. By Elijah’s word, the prophet multiplied food, raised the dead, called down fire from heaven, and parted the Jordan River.

In the scene we read about today, Elijah is about to depart the earth. His disciple, Elisha, follows him until the very end. There, he asks to inherit a double share of Elijah’s spirit. In short, he is asking for the gift of being powerful like Elijah.

In our Gospel reading today, we encounter Christ’s disciples asking to display the power of God by calling down fire from heaven on their enemies. *Christ rebuked them for it.*

As people of faith, we are invited to think about how we seek to draw on the power of God. Do we do so to build others up—*all others*? Or do we ever become consumed with wrath and think we have the right to call down judgment, like fire, on our enemies? Today’s scripture readings are like a mirror for us. But they are also an opportunity. If we feel ourselves pulled to power in order to use it against others, God calls us to turn the other way; and to seek only ever to use the power of God to restore what is broken, and to lift up the downtrodden.

All: O Living Word of God, still speaking into our hearts and minds—send your Spirit now to open our understanding so that we may choose to be more like Christ. Amen.

First Reading

The Book of 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6:1-14

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But [Elisha] said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the company of prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and the two of them crossed on dry ground. ⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” ¹⁰ He responded, “You have asked a hard thing, yet if

you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” ¹¹ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

¹³ He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water. He said, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? Where is he?” He struck the water again, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha crossed over.

Responsorial

Psalm 16

One: Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, “You are my authority; I have no good apart from you.”

All: The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.

One: I bless the LORD, who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the LORD always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

All: You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore. 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 9:51-56

When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for his arrival, ⁵³ but they did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” ⁵⁵ But [Jesus] turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then they went on to another village.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Meditation:

How Do You Use the Power of God?

One: Anytime we reflect on things that have to do with power, it is a looking glass into our own hearts. Abraham Lincoln once said, “*Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.*” It is a lesson that Christ’s first disciples needed to learn. With access to the power of God, they sought to destroy their enemies. Christ rebuked that attitude, and commanded: “Love your enemies.” In today’s Gospel reading, where do you see yourself in the story?

[Silent contemplation]

One: Perhaps, we like the disciples, sometimes are quick to fall back into ways of judgement and wrath. When we do, Love needs to tell us, “No!” Yet, that same Love calls to us again and again: “Beloved, bear the cost of discipleship! Be willing to define power as love, and final victory as reconciliation.” May we be so bold. Amen.

Hymn

“The Power of Your Love” #467

Lord, I come to you; let my heart be changed, renewed,
Flowing from the grace that I’ve found in you.
And Lord, I’ve come to know—the weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away—by the power of your love.

Chorus:

*Hold me close, let your love surround me. Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait, I’ll rise up like the eagle, and I will soar with you;
Your Spirit leads me on—in the power of your love.*

Lord, unveil my eyes; let me see you face to face,
The knowledge of your love as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life,
In living every day—by the power of your love.

(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: 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

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 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 all who have asked to be on our prayer list—and so we ask: 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 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

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.

Offertory/Ministry of Music “Actions Speak Louder Than Words” Ensemble

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: Holy and loving God, in the Reign of God we learn new lessons: that power is love, mercy is justice, and service is the pathway to redeem the world.

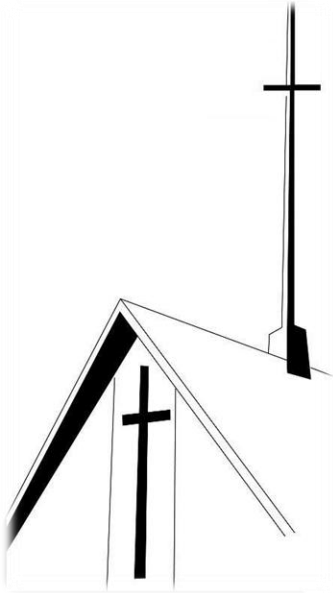
All: **With the power you give us, let us learn to channel the ways of love—both in times of glorious joy, and in the crosses we endure. Until Christ comes, we seek to be the love, promise, and peace of God on earth. Amen!**

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth” #614

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we. Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

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



Next Week:
Sunday, July 6
11:00 AM

Readings:
Galatians 6:1-6
Psalm 66:1-9
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Theme: Sent Out!

***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



Community United Church

**The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God and in honor of
Independence Day from Ginnie Burger**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- July 8: Liberty House Meal Preparation and Sharing with U.S. Veterans
- July 9: Spirits & Spirituality at Andy's Pub - 6:30 PM gathering; 7:00 PM discussion
- July 16: Resonate – 7:00 PM
- July 20: Service Sunday – 12:15 PM
- July 21: Council – 6:30 PM

Reminders:

- ***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, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Josh Cook & Danny Kaerberlein, Helena Burgos, The Vadzemnieks Family, Sharon Cooper, and Sandra Ganley

Current Council Members:

Mike Pruzinsky (President), Debbie Anderson (Vice President), Vacant (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

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