

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The First Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022

11:00 AM

The First Sunday of Advent



Today's Readings:

2 Samuel 7:8-17

Psalm 2

Luke 1:5-38



Advent I:

Prophets, Kings, and Ordinary Folks

An Ancient Promise, an Unexpected Fulfillment

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty, Senior Pastor

Pastor Joy Johnson, Associate Minister

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

The new church year is upon us! We begin with Advent, which means "to wait." It is a four-week season of remembering our 'waiting on Christ' to come into the world—in his birth and in his glory. This year we are focusing our Advent worship on the stories of those people and heavenly beings who prepared the way for Christ to come: the family of John the Baptist, Angels, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joseph the husband of Mary, and all others who bore witness to the coming of Christ two thousand years ago. Together, let us once again prepare the way for Christ into our hearts!

Welcome & Announcements
Centering Music

Invocation

One: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God our Creator, Christ the long-awaited Messiah, and the Holy Spirit, our eternal Advocate and friend.

All: And also with you.

One: As we come into the seasons of Advent and Christmas, once more, we ask you, Spirit of God, to stir in our hearts and in our minds. Help us to uncover new inspiration from ancient story. Help us find hope, as we live in a world wounded by despair.

All: In our worship today, remind us again of the wisdom of your will: that you entered into our humanity, through Jesus, at just the right time, in just the right way; but certainly as we least expected it. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “Blessed Be the God of Israel” #158

Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,
Who visits and redeems us, and grants us liberty.
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;
God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace.

Now from the house of David a child of grace has come,
A Savior who will lead us to our eternal home.
Before him goes the herald, forerunner in the way,
The prophet of salvation, the harbinger of day.

On all by death imprisoned the sun begins to rise,
The dawning of forgiveness upon the sinner's eyes,
To guide the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace;
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!

***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.

(You may choose to shake hands, hug, or simply acknowledge one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)

Advent Candles

One: People of God, as we will hear from our scripture readings today, long ago the prophet Nathan promised King David that there would be an heir on the throne of his kingdom forever. In Hebrew, the word *messiah* means anointed one—the king. From that day forward, the promise of a *messiah* became part of the story of faith.

All: From that day forward, the people of Israel would take refuge in the promise that their kingdom would have no end; and God would make it so.

One: And yet their kingdom did fall! The people of God would bring their questions and lamentations before God, “*What of your promise of an everlasting kingdom? What of your promise, O God, of a king—a messiah—on the throne of David, forever?*”

All: Today we light our first advent candle, recalling the hope of all people who have ever waited for God to fully-fill the promise of an eternal kingdom and a messiah to restore all things. Amen.

Advent Song

“Wait for the Lord”

#166

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!
(Sing 3x)

First Reading

The Second Book of the Prophet Samuel 7:8-17

⁸ Now [God said to the prophet Nathan]: “Therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, ⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. ¹⁵ But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Responsorial

Psalm 2:7-11

One: I will tell of the decree of the LORD—the Holy One said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession...”.

All: **Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with reverence; with trembling kiss God’s feet—Happy are those who take refuge in God. Amen!**

*Doxology

“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 1:5-38

⁵ In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

⁸ Once when he was serving as priest before God during his section’s turn of duty, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. ¹⁰ Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his

birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” ¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I know that this will happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.” ¹⁹ The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.”

²¹ Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering at his delay in the sanctuary. ²² When he did come out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. ²³ When his time of service was ended, he returned to his home.

²⁴ After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, ²⁵ “This is what the Lord has done for me in this time, when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.”

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

*Prophets, Kings, and Ordinary Folks:
An Ancient Promise, An Unexpected Fulfillment*

Pastor Rich

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
Oh, blest is Christ that came—in God’s most holy name.

He brings God’s rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.
Oh, blest is Christ that came—in God’s most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior’s rule embrace.
His tidings of salvation proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow before him, their voices will adore him.
Oh, blest is Christ that came—in God’s most holy name.

Communion

Pastor: People of God, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Into Bethlehem we believe God manifested in humanity, through Christ Jesus, to be our living bread.

Pastor: In our time, and in our place, the celebration of Christ’s birth happens in the cold and darkness of winter.

All: The darkness requires us to seek out light, to see where we are going. The cold requires us to seek warmth for our very lives. Scripture and season both point to our need for communion with the One who can be our light, our warmth, and our food for life.

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 Christ who gave his life as the bread of heaven and as the cup of eternal life—and as the One who is the light in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome.

All: Here at this Table we remember that Christ was born into the world to be an outpouring of God’s Love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.

Pastor: Beloved of God, come to the Table and receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Life.



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 people who have been waiting for you, O God to move in their lives—waiting for inspiration, for direction, for healings, for hope, and for peace.

All: God hear our prayer!

One: That the leaders of nations, governments, faith communities, and families would learn to walk in the ways of justice and righteousness, so that all might be at peace and live in safety. We especially pray for those communities and people who have suffered from terrible violence.

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/donate/

Or, if you prefer to mail in a check, that can be addressed to the church at:

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music and Time for Contemplation

Cheryl Strecker

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 Prayer of Thanks

*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, like Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Mary before us, send us out into the world to prepare the way of the Lord—to open the gates of kindness and justice; to make level the paths of life with your love.

All: Grant us faith, hope, and courage to go out into the world to announce a Savior our eyes have not seen, but that our spirits have encountered in the fire of your divine love. Amen!

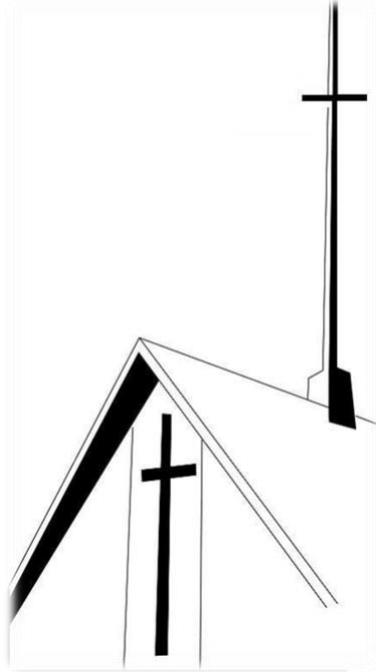
*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” #153

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

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



Next Sunday, December 4, 2022:
11:00 AM

The Second Week of Advent:

Hebrews 1:1-14

Psalm 148

Luke 2:8-14

Theme: *The Ministry of Angels*

***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



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THE ALTAR FLOWERS THIS MORNING ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF HIS MOM ELAINE MARTIN FROM BOB MARTIN

**THE SECOND ALTAR PIECE IS FROM MELANIE VADZEMNIEKS
IN HONOR OF HER MOM'S BIRTHDAY**

If you are interested in Poinsettias for Christmas Eve,
please see the sign-up sheets in Fellowship Hall

WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army), Shelby Wescott (Army), Mathew Anderson (Army) and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Rod and Dew Johnson, Dan Wingerter, Jill, Phillip Harris, Harry Lamb, Jimmyo, Jimmy Gillespie, Sue Scheiwer, Jesse, Brenda, Grace, John, Julie Davis, Diane Walker, George Churley, Rose, Dick, Skinny, Tammy McIntyre, Robin Adams, Joannie, Brandie, Ralph Kester, Sharon Cooper, Sandy Gool, Jerry and Kathy Koziol, Todd Carrier, Teddy Long and Laura Stone

Council Members:

Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Ginnie Burger (Treas.), Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall