

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



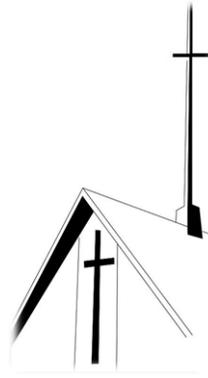
14th Annual Diversity Service

October 23, 2022:

11:00 AM

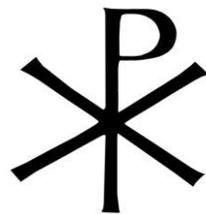
The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

From the Day of Pentecost until the day before Advent, the Church is in the Season of Pentecost. Having moved beyond the holy days of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, we tend to call this long stretch of months: Ordinary Time. In truth, there is nothing "ordinary" about Ordinary Time. It is meant to be a period in the Church year when we intentionally seek to grow and flourish in faith. The green colors throughout the sanctuary symbolize that. So let us grow together in both Spirit and Love.



Today's Readings:

Joel 2:26-28
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Psalm 84:1-7
Luke 18:9-14



Theme:

Celebrating Diversity in the Reign of God

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!*

Welcome, Prayer Requests & Announcements
Centering Music

Invocation

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

All: And also with you.

One: People of God, we are part of the church universal—faithful people of every color, gender identity, class, sexual orientation, age, and ability. We are gathered by God to be loved, and then, to go out into the world to love, serve, and stand up for justice!

All: We are an open and affirming church! Together let us worship God, rejoicing in the good news which we celebrate this day. Amen!

*Opening Hymn

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” #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,
Wellspring 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 & 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.)

Statement of Faith

One: People of God, what is the Word and Wisdom that we hear from the Sovereign Creator of the Universe?

All: This is the good news: There is a place in God's heart, there is a place at Christ's table, and there is a place here, and in every welcoming church, for all people. Faith is an illuminating guide, not a warden that imprisons the mind. Whatever is loving, just, compassionate, thoughtful, and healing—all these things are welcome here. Anyone who embodies such things shows forth the glory of God! Amen!

Ministry of Music:

"Unruly Heart"

Leah Johnson

First Reading

The Book of the Prophet Joel 2:26-28

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁸ Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.



Second Reading

Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

⁶ As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. ⁸ From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the nations might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for God's heavenly kingdom. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial

Psalm 84:1-7

One: How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

All: My soul longs, indeed it faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

One: Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my Sovereign and my God.

All: Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to the city of God. 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 18:9-14

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

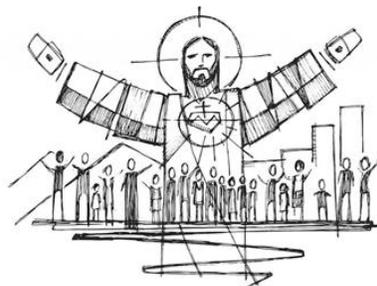
One: This is the Gospel of Christ for the people of God.

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

“Celebrating Diversity in the Reign of God”

Pastor Rich



Song of Response

“For the Children”

God, we gather as your people to raise our song above,
And we dare to claim the promise of your love.
Though the day may not yet be here,
We trust it soon will be
When your children will be free.

Chorus:

*Oh, may our hearts and minds be opened,
Fling the church doors open wide.
May there be room enough for everyone inside.
For in God there is a welcome, in God we all belong.
May that welcome be our song.*

Oh, we sing for all the children, that one day they be free;
And we sing for generations yet to be,
That they never have a reason to doubt that they are blessed.
May they, in your love, find rest.
(Chorus)

Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear and shame,
So afraid of who they are and whom they love.
May the message now be banished that your love is for the few;
May their faith in you renew.
(Chorus)

God, we're working for the future when children far and wide
Can live their lives with dignity and pride.
As they grow in strength and stature, may they join us hand in hand,
As against all hate we stand.
(Chorus)



AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, to whose deeds we testify: God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death. God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. In Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator. God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, classes, tongues, sexual orientations, gender identities, and races. God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table; and to join him in his passion and victory. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.

COMMUNION LITURGY

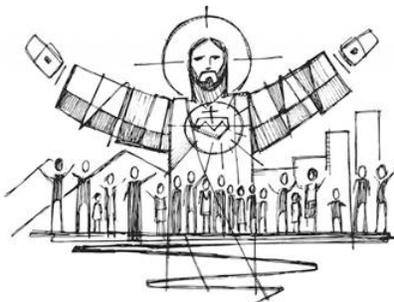
Pastor: People of God, come to the table! Christ promised that as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we not only remember him, but we commune with him by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

All: **This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come. At this table, all who are far off are made very near. 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 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!



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 who have been harmed and exiled by churches—those that have used religion as a weapon, rather than spirituality as a source of strength and welcome.

All: **God hear our prayer!**

One: That all people would grow in the assurance of the divine image within them, and that we would dare to shine that light of God through our diversities.

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.

Financial offerings are now accepted online 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:

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 Music

"The Joke"

Katie Schaff

*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: You know us and search us by name, O God, and in your sight we have found favor.

All: Almighty God, as we glimpse your greatness, may we see your glory reflected in each one of us. For you have called and chosen all people to bear your image in the world. By your Spirit, may our witness be expressed with the contagious joy of your love. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“Rainbow Connection”

(Song leaders will sing verses 1 and 2. Congregation, on verse 3, please stand, as able and sing!)

Why are there so many songs about rainbows and what’s on the other side?

Rainbows are visions but only illusions and rainbows have nothing to hide.

So we’ve been told and some choose to believe it—I know they’re wrong wait and see.

Someday we’ll find it, the rainbow connection:

The lovers, the dreamers, and me.

Who said that every wish would be heard and answered

When wished on the morning star?

Somebody thought of that and someone believed it—look what it’s done so far!

What’s so amazing that keeps us stargazing? And what do we think we might see?

Someday we’ll find it, the rainbow connection:

The lovers, the dreamers, and me.

All of us under its spell,

We know that it’s probably magic...

Have you been half asleep and have you heard voices? I’ve heard them calling my name.
Is this this sweet sound that calls the young sailors? The voice might be one and the same.

I’ve heard it too many times to ignore it: it’s something that I’m supposed to be!

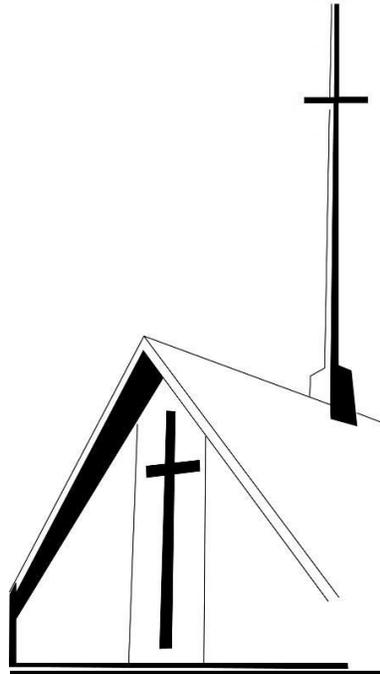
Someday we’ll find it, the rainbow connection:

The lovers, the dreamers and me!

Postlude

Cheryl Strecker

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



Next week:

- **October 30: REFORMATION SUNDAY - "EVER REFORMING BY THE LIVING WORD OF GOD"**

***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