

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



October 25, 2026

18th Annual Diversity Sunday!

11:00 AM

Theme: A Wider Welcome: The Love We Pass Along

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Centering Music

"Oh How He Loves You and Me" #270 3X

O how he loves you and me,
O how he loves you and me;
He gave his life—what more could he give?
O how he loves you, O how he loves me,
O how he loves you and me!

Invocation

One: Gracious Creator, we gather today as an Open and Affirming community, celebrating the beautiful diversity of God's creation.

All: No matter who we are, whom we love, or how we identify, we are wonderfully made and deeply loved.

One: We may come from different cultures, races, generations, families, and backgrounds. We may have different abilities, beliefs, experiences, and ways of seeing the world.

All: Every person has dignity. Every voice deserves to be heard. Every life has precious value, equal to every other.

One: We acknowledge that we do not all think alike, believe alike, or see the world through the same eyes. Yet we are called to listen with compassion, to learn from one another, and to seek understanding rather than division.

All: May our differences never divide us. May they enrich us, teach us, and remind us of the many ways God's love is revealed.

One: As we celebrate many expressions of human diversity, including the LGBTQIA+ community, may we open our hearts, widen our welcome, and teach our children to do the same.

All: May the generations who follow us inherit not our prejudices, but our compassion; not our divisions, but our love.

One: We are many, yet we belong to one another. Come, let us celebrate the God who created us in beautiful variety!

All: With open hearts and joyful spirits, let us worship together. Amen!



***Opening Hymn**

“Gather Us In” #649 Vv. 1,2,4

Here in this place, the new light is streaming,
Shadows of doubt are vanished away.
See in this space our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
Gather us in; our spirits inflame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken;
We shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
We are the old, who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and haughty;
Gather us in, the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly;
Give us the courage to enter the song.

Not just in buildings, small and confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
Here in this place the new light is shining;
Now is God present, and now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever;
Gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in, all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

***Opening Prayer**

***The Peace of Christ**

One: The peace of Christ be with you, all!

All: And also with you!

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



First Reading

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,* heirs according to the promise.

First Message

Beyond the Labels

Lee Pomeroy

Hymn of Response

"This Little Light of Mine"

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel? No. I'm gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No. I'm gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No. I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(repeat first verse)

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Responsorial

Psalm 139:1-14

One: O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

All: You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

One: Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

All: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

One: For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

All: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. 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

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Special Music

"It's Not Easy Being Green"

Dan Bainbridge, arr., Trey Wallace, Cheryl Strecker

Children's Message

Amber Jarosewski, "Mark," and "Melody"

Song of Preparation

“Jesus Loves the Little Children”

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world:
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world!
(repeat)

Second Message

A Wider Welcome: The Love We Pass Along

Pastor Joy

Song of Response

“Be Not Afraid” #430 Vv. 1,3

You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.
You shall see the face of God and live.

Chorus

*Be not afraid, I go before you always.
Come, follow me, and I will give you rest.*

Blessed are your poor; for the kingdom shall be theirs.
Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.
And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of me,
Blessed, blessed are you!
(Chorus)

Celebration of Communion

Pastor: Beloved children of God, come to the table with open hands and love in your hearts, for this is Christ’s table—a place where every person is valued, treated with kindness, and embraced in fairness and love.

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 we take the 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: People of God, let us center our hearts and draw on the Holy Spirit’s power within us. We bring forward now the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether they be joys or sorrows.... *(prayer requests are presented)*. We also pray for all who have asked to be on our printed 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 now 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

Offertory/Ministry of Music - You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught” / “Children Will Listen”

James Wallace, Bob Martin, Leah Johnson, Julie Lokahi

Offertory 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: God of boundless love, as we leave this place, widen our welcome and open our hearts to every person we meet. Teach us to recognize your image in one another and to pass along the love, dignity, and belonging we have received.

All: Send us forth to make room, build bridges, and share Christ's love in word and action, so that the welcome grows wider and the love continues through us. Amen!

***Blessing**

***Closing Hymn**

"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)

(Chorus)

Until we meet again, remember: you are loved!

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

Next Week:

Sunday, November 1, 2026
11:00 AM – (Prelude at 10:50 AM)

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

*Please join us as we gather in love and remembrance of family, friends, and Church family
who have gone before us.*

***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

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Community United Church

The flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Nancy Alberico in loving memory of Debbie Clouse, and by Pat and Elmer Smith in loving memory of their grandson, Caleb Smith, who passed away on October 29, 2025.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Sunday, November 1: **All Saints Commemoration** during Sunday worship
 - Mark your Calendars for: **Friendsgiving** on Wednesday, November 18th (Holiday Supper)

Need hearing assistance? We have four available devices to enhance your worship experience! Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.

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), Zachary Oliver (PA Army National Guard), Aran Maloney (Air National Guard), and Connor Bille (Army)

PRAYERS FOR:

Linda Hilbert, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Ethel Davis, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Sandra Ganley, Dorothy Moyer, Celeste Peck, Linda Foll Johnson, Debra Jackman, Zoey Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Veronica, Joan Schultz, Michelle and Melissa, Tom and Thea Hyatt, Randy Koziol, Barbara Thompson, Tanisha and Jaeda, Barbara Hickey, Sandy Gool, Jim Haglund, Shirley Carrier, Ruth Zavaglia, Brad Stewart, Cain Hickey, Patty Brogdan, Lynn Oliver, Rowan Oliver, Katrina Strohmeier, Theodore, Bill and Marilyn.

Your 2026 Council Members:

Thea Hyatt, *President*, Ginnie Burger, *Vice President*, Tracy Applebee Davis, *Treasurer*, Juli Tonks, *Secretary*, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, Chuck Becker, Pat Smith, and Jackson Feiock. You may call the church office at 814-864-4429 for pastoral and administrative matters or use email: communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com

Don't forget to check Facebook and our website: **communityunited.church**
Community United Church is committed to ethical and legal compliance
in our music and livestreaming: