

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The Second Sunday after Christmas

January 5, 2025

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy L. Johnson

Centering Music “Jesus, Name Above All Names” #177

Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, Living Word.
(Repeat All)

Invocation

One: Beloved of God, through Christ Jesus we have seen the true light that shines over all creation.

All: As the Scriptures say, “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory.”

One: Holy God, we recognize that this is the good news of Christmas; that Christ came to show us how to walk the path of wisdom, enlightened by Your love, so that our lives might be filled with Your grace and renewed and refreshed by the Holy Spirit.

All: Glory to God who has blessed us in Spirit and in truth with Christ, to enlighten everyone, everywhere. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” #228 v. 1,2,4,6

While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around, and glory shone around.

“Fear not!” said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind;
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and human kind, to you and human kind.

“The heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands, and in a manger laid, and in a manger laid.”

“All glory be to God on high and to the earth be peace;
Good will hence-forth from heaven to all begin and never cease, begin and 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.

First Reading

Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,^[a] ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[b] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us^[c] for adoption as his children^[d] through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[e] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this^[f] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Responsorial

Psalm 147:12-20

One: Extol the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! ¹³ For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you.

All: He grants peace within your borders; he fills you with the finest of wheat. He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.

One: He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down hail like crumbs— Who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel.

All: He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his ordinances. Praise the LORD! 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

John 1: (1-9), 10-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Children's Message

Song

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" #180 v. 1,2

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

Message

Living in the Light of Christ

Pastor Joy

Song of Response "Arise, Your Light Is Come!" #231 v. 1,3,4

Arise, your light is come! The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.

Arise your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing, God's power will make us strong.



Communion

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

All: Bethlehem means "house of bread." In Bethlehem we believe God manifested in Christ Jesus to be our living bread, to nourish us forever.

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.

Communion Music

"I Wonder as I Wander"

Cheryl

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 everyone who has asked their name to be on the prayer list [*see last page of the bulletin*]. 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

God is inviting us to serve in response to God's great love for us, so that the whole world may know the fullness of God's peace.

How is God calling you this week to give of your time, talent, and resources?

Community United Church has the following ministries opportunities and needs:

Prayer ministries

Food ministries: Liberty House & Service Sunday

Children's Church leaders

Financial gifts to cover monthly needs (every contribution helps so much)

Every gift is great. Let us all give 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

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, we know that darkness cannot overcome Your light. May the light that was given to us through Christ Jesus continue to illumine our way in all that we do and in all that we say,

All: May we be renewed and strengthened, trusting in Your love for all your children. And may we begin *each new day* with open hearts and loving arms which show others the reflected light of our Savior. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Go Tell it on the Mountain” #218

Refrain

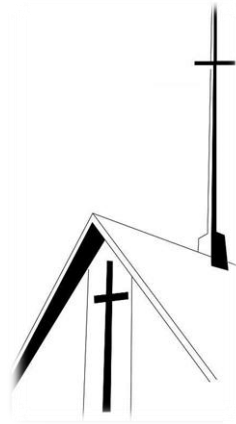
Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,
Behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light
(refrain)

The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo! Above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth.
(refrain)

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.
(refrain)

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



Next week: The Third Sunday after Christmas

Celebration of Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

***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 Ginnie Burger and in celebration of Beverly Burger, her mother-in-law, whose birthday was January 2.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 12, 2025: Celebration of Epiphany, 11:00 AM Worship
January 19, 2025: Worship at 11:00 AM & Annual Congregational Meeting at 12:00 PM

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:

Jackson Feiock (Army), Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army), Brittany Duncan (Army), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard), Shelby Wescott (Army), Matthew Anderson (Army), Jaden O'Hara (Army), Toby Charlton (Marines), Cole Poshett (Army) & Hunter Miaczynski (Army)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Diane Walker, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Shirley Carrier, Dave Woledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Sharon Cooper, Josh Cook & Danny Kaeberlein, The Vadzemnieks Family, Reverend Susan Strouse & Reverend Barbara Peronteau, and John & Tina Schnarrs

Council Members:

Debbie Anderson (President), Angel Conrad (VP), Nancy Alberico (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, Michele Vahey, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Bob Martin

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