

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The Second Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2026

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

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

Centering Music

“Be Still, My Soul” #451 V. 1

Be still my soul: the Lord is on your side!
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide—
In every change God faithful will remain.
Be still my soul: your best, your heavenly friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, throughout our lives you call us to renewal, rebirth, and new horizons. You are the ancient God of new things, stirring inspiration in our hearts and leading us to unexpected places, which require us to walk by faith.

All: Keep us open to your calling, as all the great mothers and fathers of our faith were: like Sarah and Abraham, Miriam and Moses, and Mary and Joseph. Keep us soft in heart so that we are ready to be fashioned anew by your gentle yet sovereign hands. Amen!

* Opening Hymn

“Come and Find the Quiet Center” #477

Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
In the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!

***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.

Lenten Time of Confession

One: *Let us pray together:* O God, we continue our journey through the season of Lent, walking with Christ from the desert towards his cross. We acknowledge that it is good for us to inspect our lives—and to ask you to meet our every weakness or challenge with grace. We pray not only for ourselves, but also for the church universal. We have not always lived your calling for us to be the body of Christ in words or deeds. And so, we pray for those times in our lives when we have chosen to harden our hearts, refusing to receive counsel and correction:

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

One: For those times when your churches have made religion too hard for others by imposing harsh literalism instead of loving spiritual wisdom:

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

One: For those times when we have doubted that your love is greater than our own, treating you, instead, as a god of wrath rather than the God of mercy:

All: Grant us spiritual sight, O God, to know you as the Holy One of unconditional love and never-ending mercy—the same God who calls us to live in the holiness of love and in the restorative justice of mercy. Amen.

Lenten Meditation & Candles

Song of Reflection

“Jesus Remember Me” #285

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

(Sing Three Times)



First Reading

The Book of Genesis 12:1-4a

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Responsorial

Psalm 121

One: I lift my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?

All: My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. God will not let your foot be moved; the Holy One who keeps you will not slumber. The God who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

One: The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.

All: The LORD will keep you from all evil; God will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Amen!

*Lenten Acclamation

“Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights” #250 V. 1

Throughout these Lenten days and nights we turn to walk the inward way,
Where meeting Christ, our guide and light, we live in hope till Easter Day.

*Gospel

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jewish people. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

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

All: Come, Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Children’s Message

Song of Preparation

“Thy Word” #664

Refrain:

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid, think I’ve lost my way, still you’re there right beside me.
And nothing will I fear as long as you are near. Please be near me to the end.

(Refrain)

I will not forget your love for me, and yet—my heart forever is wandering.
Jesus, be my guide and hold me to your side; and I will love you to the end.

(Refrain)

Message

Born Anew in Faith and Spirit

Pastor Rich

Song of Response

“Eat This Bread” #697

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

(Repeat)

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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

“The Invitation”

Bob Martin

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 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.

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

"My Little World"

Bob Martin

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*Lenten Congregational Response #576

***Make me a servant, humble and meek.
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak!
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant!
Make me a servant!
Make me a servant today!***



*Departing Prayer

One: Holy and loving God, we receive your invitation to walk in faith like Sarah and Abraham. We need your grace to be born anew in the life of your Spirit. We trust that you will grant us the gifts of faith, hope, and love to follow your call and to trust that you will renew us day by day.

All: Spirit of God, our hearts are open to your leading, our faith invites your holy presence. Let us hear your call and your promises, and then trust that you are with us always, from now through eternity. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” #358

Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit, let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, never-more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.



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



Next Week:

**Sunday, March 8:
The Third Sunday in Lent &
International Women's Day**

Scriptures:

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

John 4:5-42

Theme:

Women at the Well: Stories of Seeking and Finding

***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

Our flowers this morning are given to the glory of God and in celebration of two birthdays today, March 1st! Ginnie Burger gives flowers in honor of her sister, Alice, and Kathy Koziol presents flowers in honor of the birthday of her brother, Elmer. Happy Birthdays!

This week:

March 4: Bible Study with Pastor Rich: A Catholic and Protestant Dialogue, Part 1 (6:30 PM)

Coming up:

March 8: Worship on the Third Sunday of Lent and celebration of **International Women's Day**

March 10: Liberty House Meal Preparation and Sharing

March 12: Crafternoon (1:30-3:30)

March 11: Soup & Simplicity: Lenten Devotions and Social, Fellowship Hall (6:30 PM)

March 15: Service Sunday

March 17: Ladies' Outreach Group - St. Patrick's Day Luncheon in Fellowship Hall

March 18: Resonate

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), 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)

PRAYERS FOR:

Linda Hilbert, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ethel Davis,
Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Dave Wooledge, Sharon Cooper,
Sandra Ganley, Celeste Peck, Linda Foll Johnson, Shirley Carrier, The Kuzma Family, Debra Jackman,
Zoey Cathie Witmire, Hannah Vadzemnieks, Laura Will, Paul Dietz, the Smith and Schmidt families,
Linda Weber, Veronica, baby Elijah, Kim Normandy, Joan Schultz

Your 2026 CUC Council:

Thea Hyatt, President, Ginnie Burger, Vice President, Tracy Davis, Treasurer,
Michele Vahey, Secretary (Interim), Justin Graff, Angel Conrad, Chuck Becker, Don Cameron

CUC IS LOOKING FOR A COUNCIL SECRETARY

We currently have an open position on the CUC Council and are looking for someone who can provide valuable support as Secretary and serve as a voting member. If you are interested, please speak with any Council member or contact the Church office. Thank you!

You may call the church office at 814-864-4429 for pastoral and administrative matters or use email:

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com