

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



Journey to Bethlehem: The Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2024

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music

“All Earth is Hopeful” #163

All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God’s creative task:
This, the labor of people who struggle to see
How God’s truth and justice set everybody free

People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
“A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel”
She conceived him, “God with us” Our brother whose birth
Restores hope and courage to children of this earth

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, you have revealed yourself to humanity in many and varied ways—through angels and prophets, signs and wonders, and even in stillness and quiet voices.

All: On this second Sunday of Advent, we come to a great mystery of faith: that through the consent of Mary and the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ was miraculously conceived; born to set all people free through the ways of love.

One: As John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, Mary delivered Christ to the world.

All: O God, as we worship you today, may we each learn to consent to your ways. May we also bear Christ to the world, as Mary so boldly did. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” #156 v 1, 2, 5

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh.
Awake and harken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin: make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

All praise to you, eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won,
Whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.

***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

The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 7:10-15

Again the Lord spoke to [King] Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Responsorial

Psalm 131

One: O LORD, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high.

All: I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

One: But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.

All: O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time on and forevermore. Amen!

*Doxology

"Savior of the Nations, Come" #168

Savior of the nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here your home.
Marvel, now, O Heav'n and Earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.

Praise to God the Father sing, Praise to God the Son, our King
Praise to God the Spirit be, Ever and eternity.

*Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

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^[d] 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!

Children's Message: Advent Candles: Week II

We invite all young people to come forward at this time.

Advent Song "Come now, O Prince of Peace" #157

Come now, O God of love, make us one body;
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people (*Sing 3x*)

Message *Journey to Bethlehem II: The Annunciation and Consent of Mary* Pastor Rich

Song of Response "Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn" #160, v 1, 4

**All: Awake! Awake and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! the Child of our longing.**

One: Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together, to open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

**All: Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless**

One: Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our endless story. May God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.

Communion

Pastor: People of God, Mary accepted God's Word to her from the angel Gabriel, but only after she was greeted as favored one, after she processed being perplexed, and after she confronted her own humanity. As we read the story, her consent seemed to happen in the breadth of a heartbeat.

**All: May we who face our humanity on a daily basis, and find ourselves perplexed
by God's message of favor, be patient with ourselves and with one another in
process.**

Pastor: People of Christ, the Child promised to Mary, filled, and continues to fill, hearts longing for stability and belonging.

**All: May we, like Mary, come to accept God's presence in our lives by finding that
which we seek in the birth and nurture of Love: God's Word, God's Christ,
God's Presence.**

Pastor: People of Spirit, for whom nothing is impossible with God, we live in hope by doing the next right thing before us. We gather at this Table, we take this Bread, the bread of heaven; and we take this Cup, the cup of transformation; and we eat, and we drink, in communion with all the saints present with us in the process.

**All: In holy communion may we receive Divine Love that in our being we may
give birth to love for ourselves, for one another and for the transformation
and fulfillment of all Life.**

Pastor: Family of God, Come to the Table.

Communion Music

"Emmanuel"

Cheryl Strecker

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*] 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:

House and Grounds Team

Hospitality for socials and services

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

Offering & Offertory

"Breath of Heaven"

Addie Johnson

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, your voice is still speaking! Your Word still seeks birthing into the world—to bring healing, peace, and love.

All: We join now, with Mary, to be Christ-bearers to the world. We honor her unique calling to give birth to the Redeemer of the world. Yet, we join in the same mission of giving birth to your Word and Wisdom, to make Christ known to all. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “Angels We Have Heard on High” #188

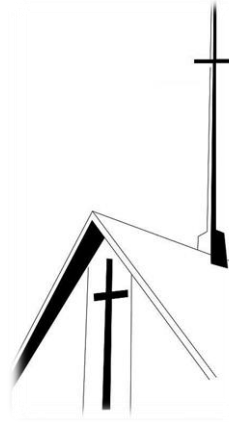
Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains
Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing
Mary, Joseph lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise
Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo!



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



**Next Sunday, December 15, 2024:
Journey to Bethlehem III:**

The Third Week of Advent:

Isaiah 9:2-4

Psalm 143

Matthew 1:18-25

Theme:

Joseph's Dream

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect
with a small group or church ministry?***

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