

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 7, 2025

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 Vv. 1, 5

Savior of the nations, come, show yourself the Virgin's Son,
Fill with wonder, all the earth, that our God chose such a birth.

Praise to you, O Lord, we sing: praise to Christ, our newborn King.
With the Father, Spirit, one, let your lasting kingdom come.

*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 V. 2

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

Message

The Annunciation and Consent of Mary

Pastor Rich



Song of Response

“Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn” #160, v 1, 2, 4

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

To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
His humble song is quiet and near,
Yet fills the earth with its ringing;
Music to heal the broken soul
And hymns of loving kindness,
The thunder of his anthems roll
To shatter all hatred and blindness.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
Though dark the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light,
Be strong and loving and fearless.
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, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Into 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

“Be Born In Me”

Dina Johnson

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: *Our offerings support the inclusive ministries of this church. Thank you!*

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

“One Small Child”

Cheryl Strecker

Offertory 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

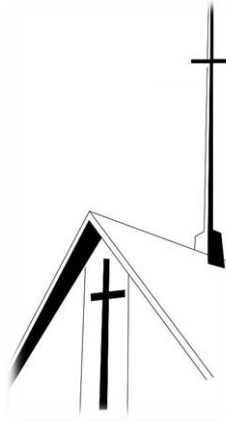
Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains
Gloria, in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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 14, 2025:
Journey to Bethlehem III:**

The Third Week of Advent:

Isaiah 9:2-4

Psalm 143

Matthew 1:18-25

Theme:

The Shelter of Joseph

***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 and in loving memory of
Richard Doerfer, Dina Johnson's Dad.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 10: Spirits & Spirituality at Calamari's: 6:30 PM -*Advent, Christmas, and Eternal Hope*
December 11: Christmas-themed Crafternoon 1:30-3:30 PM
December 15: Church Council Meeting 6:30 PM – Please RSVP to Mike Pruzinsky
December 16: Ladies' Group Christmas Party potluck – please rsvp and bring a \$10 gift
December 17: Resonate: "Carols and Community" at CUC -7PM

Ladies Outreach Ministries - Important!

- Again this year, the Ladies' Group is seeking donations to support the "Be a Santa to a Senior" project to benefit our area Senior Citizens. Grab a name off the tree in Fellowship Hall and let Carol Rodgers or Pastor Joy know whose name you have chosen. **The deadline is December 12th.**
- Winter clothing items are being collected to benefit the students at Perry Elementary School. Scarves, hats, gloves in sizes XS to XL are requested – **the deadline is December 14th.**

Reminders:

- ***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)

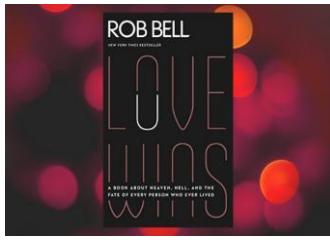
PRAYERS FOR:

Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, Ethel Davis,
Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Dorothy Moyer,
The Vadzemnieks Family, Sharon Cooper, Sandra Ganley, Celeste Peck,
Linda Foll Johnson, Todd Carrier, The Kuzma Family, Debra Jackman, Rose Goss,
Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Michael, Erin Mrenak, Paul Dietz, Ruth Schmidt

Current Council Members:

Mike Pruzinsky (President), Debbie Anderson (Vice President), Al Tilley (Treasurer), Nancy Alberico
(Secretary), Janice Skelly, Angel Conrad, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, and Mark Davis
Need to contact our Council President? Please email at: mpruzinsky@icloud.com

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



Love Wins Study at Community United Church

Join us on a multi-month exploration of Christian concepts about the afterlife, including the ancient sacred hope that all people will be redeemed by the love of God in Christ.

October 2025

October 1:	Bible Study (Chapters 1-3 of <i>Love Wins</i>)
October 8:	Spirits & Spirituality: On the Afterlife
October 15:	Documentary & Discussion: <i>Hellbound?</i>
October 16-30:	Small Groups as Requested
October 22:	Art Show V: Does Love Win? POSTPONED UNTIL 2026
October 29:	Evening Small Group Discussion
October 30:	Morning Small Group Discussion

November 2025

November 2:	Church & the Paranormal: Angels, Demons, and the Afterlife
November 5:	Bible Study (Chapters 4-6 of <i>Love Wins</i>)
November 12:	Spirits & Spirituality: Scare Tactics or Love Tactics? How what we say matters.
November 13-30:	Small Groups as Requested
November 19:	Resonate: Friendsgiving
November 22:	Afternoon Small Group

December 2025

December 3:	Bible Study (Chapters 7-8 of <i>Love Wins</i>)
December 4-19:	Small Groups as Requested
December 10:	Spirits & Spirituality: Advent, Christmas, and Eternal Hope
December 17:	Resonate: "Carols and Community"