

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 10, 2023

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Love in Action

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Centering Music "As We Gather" #646

As we gather may your Spirit work within us, as we gather may we glorify your Name.
Knowing well that as our hearts begin to worship, we'll be blessed because we came,
We'll be blessed because we came. *(Sing twice)*

Invocation to Worship

One: Holy and loving God, since the beginning of time, you have been creating, redeeming and sustaining all of creation in your powerful and empowering love. You invite us, daily, to renew our lives by that same love.

All: **Spirit of God, help us to choose the ways of love as Christ did. Where we have fallen short, open our hearts to gentle correction. Where we encounter injustice, help us to bring healing restoration. And now, around your throne, may we behold once again: all creation is loved by you. Amen!**

*Opening Song "Come, Christians, Join to Sing" #87

Come, Christians, join to sing: Alleluia! Amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King; Alleluia! Amen!
Let all, with heart and voice, before God's throne rejoice;
Praise is God's gracious choice: Alleluia! Amen!

Come, lift your hearts on high: Alleluia! Amen!
Let praises fill the sky; Alleluia! Amen!
Christ is our Guide and Friend; to us he'll condescend;
His love shall never end: Alleluia! Amen!

Praise yet our Christ again: Alleluia! Amen!
Life shall not end the strain: Alleluia! Amen!
On heaven's blissful shore, God's goodness we'll adore.
Singing forevermore: "Alleluia! Amen!"

***Opening Prayer**

***Passing of the Peace**

One: The Lord be with you!

All: **And also with you!**

One: Today, let us offer our worship not only in the adoration of our God, but also with intentions to heal our hearts, our homes, our streets, our nation, and our world.

All: **Together, in Christ's name, we declare it so, and pledge to renew the world in works of love and mercy. Amen.**

First Reading

Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:8-14

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in [unjust sexual relations] and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Meditation

"On Love"

One: In our first reading, today, the apostle Paul wrote to the early church in Rome. He commanded them to "owe no one anything, except to love one another." It's easy to have affection for those we like. But Gospel love is about tending to the wholeness, justice, and wellbeing of everyone—friend and enemy alike. Think, now, about our practice of Gospel love. Do we experience it like a debt owed to everyone? Or do we reserve it only for the few we like? *[Contemplate in silence]*

One: The apostle Paul writes that things like adultery, murder, and theft are really moments when we exchange the reign and rule of love for momentary experiences of selfish gratification. In the face of that, the apostle Paul invites followers of Jesus to reimagine our lives by the standard of love. None of us are perfect, and grace is greater than our sin. So, let us turn, now, and ask: Spirit of God, how might I choose the way of love when selfish impulses are alluring me? *[Contemplate in silence]*

One: The apostle Paul also invited the church in Rome to consider the spiritual life from the perspective of 'drawing close to our salvation'—which refers to the day when we will see Christ face to face. If you could meet Jesus now, what would you ask him, or ask of him, to help with your journey of faith? *[Contemplate in silence]*

One: As we all seek to be renewed by the power of God's love, let us sing together a musical prayer—for ourselves, and for all:

Song of Contemplation

"Ubi Caritas et Amore" #399

Where true charity and love abide,
God is dwelling there; God is dwelling there.

(Sing 3x)

Responsorial

Psalm 119:33-40

One: Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end.

All: Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

One: Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

All: Turn my heart to your decrees and not to selfish gain. Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; be gracious to me according to your word.

One: Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who revere you. Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.

All: See, I have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness be gracious to me. 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

Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message:

Love in Action

Pastor Rich



Song of Response

“The Power of Your Love” #467

Lord, I come to you; let my heart be changed, renewed,
Flowing from the grace that I’ve found in you.
And Lord, I’ve come to know—the weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away—by the power of your love.

Chorus

*Hold me close, let your love surround me.
Bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait, I’ll rise up like the eagle,
And I will soar with you;
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of your love.*

Lord, unveil my eyes; let me see you face to face,
The knowledge of your love as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life,
In living every day—by the power of your love.
(Chorus)

Celebration of Communion

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: Together, now, let us bless the elements. 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

“Untitled Hymn”

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

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 offerings can also take the form of financial contributions to the church to support our ministries.

**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, which can be addressed to the church at:
1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508**

Ministry of Music "Recordare from the Verdi Requiem"
Lizdel Collado Monahan on French Horn, Dan Bainbridge on Cello

Your offerings make this inclusive ministry possible. Thank you! Because of you, our church reaches through and beyond Erie: providing worship, community, and service. As you can give generously, it is well received.

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, you call us to righteousness and light. You teach us the undivided law of love, that we may love all your children, even as you do.

All: Send us out into the world to love with all of our will and strength. Help us to find freedom in the ways of the Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

*Blessing

***Closing Song**

“The Gift of Love” #497

Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain,
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be given by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole,
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship, and are freed.

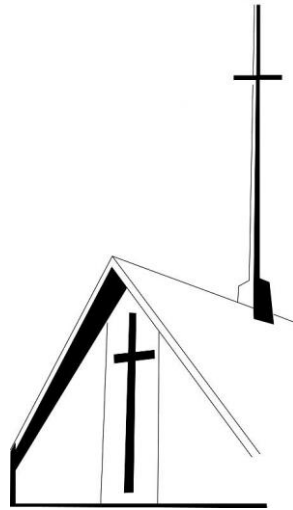


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday – September 17, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Embodying Forgiveness”

Scripture for Study:

Romans 14:1-12

Psalm 103:1-13

Matthew 18:21-35

***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 Carol Rodgers in
Memory of Theresa Kurty

Please consider signing up for our prayer ministry. This is not a prayer chain, nor another meeting or committee. We simply ask for those who are interested to email communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com and let us know if we can email you prayer requests for the church. It will not become a group email chain, nor a discussion group. It is simply (but importantly) an opportunity to pray for the life and ministries of Community United Church.

Today's Elder: Melanie Vadzemnieks Deacons: Josh Mizikowski & Becky Pomeroy

Important Note: Our "not so friendly" COVID has been visiting us here. For this reason, please maintain distance, particularly during the Passing of Peace.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

September 11: Council Meeting – 6:30 PM
September 12: Liberty House
September 13: Spirits & Spirituality – Calamari's 7:00 PM
September 17: Service Sunday
September 20: Resonate – 7:00 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:

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), DJ Miaczynski (Marines), Jaden O'Hara (Army) & Toby Charlton (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Kevin Bennett & family & friends, Rod & Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Schweiwer, Diane Walker, George Churley, Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Ron Celeski, Jan & Tim Crowe and Family, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pikulski, Randi Johnson, Lillian Hendrickson, Wilma and Janice Skelly, Ethel Davis, Jim Haglund, Chelsea Brown, John Waid, Dina Johnson & Patti Rogers.

Council Members: Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp, Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Conrad.