

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 23, 2023

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost:

The Prodigal Grace of God

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

“Sanctuary” #482

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
pure and holy, tried and true;
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.

(Sing 3x)

Invocation to Worship

One: Come! Come and worship, you who woke early, and you who slept late;
you who come often, and you who don't.

All: Whether we are first or last or somewhere in between, there is room for all of us in God's kingdom, and more than enough grace to go around. Let's worship God together! Amen!

*Opening Songs

Shelly Conrad, leader

“This is the Day” #652

This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it, and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.

(Sing 3x or as led)

“Step by Step” #494

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways;
and step by step you'll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.

(Sing 3x or as led)

“Reckless Love”

(repeat portions as led)

Before I spoke a word, you were singing over me

You have been so, so good to me

Before I took a breath, you breathe your life in me

You have been so, so good to me

Refrain

**Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine
I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, you give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God**

When I was your foe, still your love fought for me
You have been so, so good to me
When I felt no worth, you paid it all for me
You have been so, so kind to me

Bridge
There's no shadow you won't light up
Mountain you won't climb up
coming after me
There's no wall you won't kick down
Lie you won't tear down
coming after me

***Opening Prayer**

***Passing of the Peace**

One: The Lord be with you!

All: And also with you!

One: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

[Please be mindful that some people may not be able to shake hands or hug due to health precautions]

First Reading

Jonah 3:10 - 4:11

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ³ And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The LORD God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there

are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

Responsorial

Psalm 145:1-8

One: I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

All: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

One: One generation shall extol your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. They will recount the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works I will meditate.

All: They will proclaim the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

One: They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

All: The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Amen!

*Gospel Acclamation

"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 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' ⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' ⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying,

‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

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

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message: “The Prodigal Grace of God”

Pastor Joy

Song of Response “Grace Alone” #436

Every promise we can make, every prayer and step of faith;
Every difference we will make is only by His grace.
Every mountain we will climb, every ray of hope we shine;
Every blessing left behind is only by His grace.

Refrain

**Grace alone, which God supplies; strength unknown He will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone, we will go forth in grace alone.**

Every soul we long to reach, every heart we hope to teach;
Everywhere we share His peace is only by His grace.
Every loving word we say, every tear we wipe away;
Every sorrow turned to praise is only by his grace.

(Refrain)

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

“Blessings”

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

"At the Riverside"

Community United Ensemble

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, Your generosity and grace transcends our human abilities to comprehend it all. The abundance we receive is more than we think we deserve; may we be filled with greater understanding of just how much you love us.

All: May we honor You always, good and gracious Creator, for not only what we receive, but also what we are able to share with others in return. Amen!

*Blessing

***Closing Song**

“Blessed Assurance” #426

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain

**This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.**

Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending, bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

(Refrain)

Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

(Refrain)

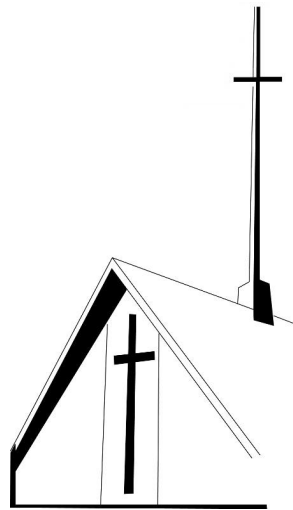


**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**

Next Sunday – October 1, 2023

10:55 AM Announcements

11:00 AM Worship



Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Unexpected Saints”

Scripture for Study:

Philippians 3:4b-14

Psalm 25:1-9

Matthew 21:23-32

***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 in celebration of Joy & Dina's Anniversary

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: Angel Conrad Deacons: David Holmes & Sandra Carlson
Next Week's Elder: Nancy Alberico Deacons: Angel Conrad & 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

October 4: Supper & Study 7:00 PM
October 9: Council Meeting 6:30 PM
October 10: Liberty House
October 11: Spirits & Spirituality – Calamari's 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 Scheiwer, 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, Celeste Eller.

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