

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



September 28, 2025

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

**Beginning the Journey: Does Love Win?**

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Richard W. McCarty & Pastor Joy L. 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.  
*(Repeat All)*

## Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, all the prophets attest that you are the Holy One of loving kindness. In Christ Jesus, you revealed yourself as unconditional love and mercy. By the Holy Spirit, we believe that your love is deeper than the ocean and goes beyond human telling.

**All: God of love, we worship you! You are our hope and our salvation, of whom shall we be afraid? Your justice is mercy, and your desire is that all people will choose to be in loving communion with you and with all of creation. Renew our faith by this vision of who you are, and in doing so, make us to be so loving. Amen!**

## \*Opening Hymn

## "God is Here!" #1

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,  
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.  
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts  
Wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our life-long need of grace;  
Here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.  
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech,  
Here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;  
here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.  
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore  
What it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,  
Keep us faithful to the Gospel; help us work your purpose out.  
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;  
We, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

## \* Opening Prayer

\*The Peace of Christ

One: The Peace of Christ be with you all!

**All: And also with you!**

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

**First Reading**

**The First Letter to Timothy 6:6-19**

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, <sup>8</sup> but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

<sup>11</sup> But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup> It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

<sup>17</sup> As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

**Responsorial**

**Psalms 91**

One: You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust."

**All: For God will deliver you from the snare of the hunter and from deadly pestilence; under God's wings you will find refuge; God's faithfulness is a shield and defense.**

One: You will not fear the terror of the night or the arrow that flies by day; or the pestilence that stalks in darkness or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

**All: A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but will not come near you.**

One: For God will command the angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

**All: On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. 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**

**Luke 16:19-31**

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup> Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup> He said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

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

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

**Children’s Message**

## Song of Preparation

“Ubi Caritas Et Amor” #399

Where true charity and love abide,  
God is dwelling there;  
God is dwelling there.  
*(Sing three times)*

## Message

*Does the Love of God Win?*

Pastor Rich



## Hymn

“O God Beyond All Praising” #64

O God beyond all praising,  
We worship you today  
And sing the love amazing  
That songs cannot repay;  
For we can only wonder  
At every gift you send,  
At blessings without number  
And mercies without end;  
We lift our hearts before you  
And wait upon your Word,  
We honor and adore you,  
Our great and mighty Lord.

Then hear, O gracious Savior,  
Accept the love we bring,  
That we who know your favor  
May serve you as our King;  
And whether our tomorrows  
Be filled with good or ill,  
We'll triumph through our sorrows  
And rise to bless you still:  
To marvel at your beauty  
And glory in your ways,  
And make a joyful duty  
Our sacrifice of praise.

## 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: 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

"Draw Me Close"

Cheryl Strecker

## 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 that is 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 all who have asked to be on our prayer list—and so we ask: Holy and Loving God, in your wisdom, meet all of these needs in the perfect way of your grace. We pray together:

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

*Your offerings are first and foremost what we give to the world through justice, kindness, and mercy—and these we can do every day. Our financial contributions to the church are what allow us to support our ministries. As you can give, please do so joyfully!*

**If you are not in the sanctuary, online donations can be made at:**

**[www.communityunited.church](http://www.communityunited.church)**

*Or, if you prefer to mail in a check, that can be addressed to the church at:*

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

## Offertory/Ministry of Music

“Which Way Are You Going?”

Kelly McLaughlin

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

\*Congregational Response #147

***“Praise God, from whom all blessings 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, we encounter you as the Holy One of unconditional love and mercy. Your desire is that all people will choose love; and your promise is that divine love will one day win.

**All:** **In a world plagued by division, violence, and chaos, we choose the ways of love. We choose to bring peace. We choose to bring healing. We choose to bring comfort. Spirit of God, infuse within us the unshakable hope that God’s love will win, even in the face of sorrows and in the crosses we carry. We pray this through Christ Jesus. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn                    “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” #358 Vv. 1, 4

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.

Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;

Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:

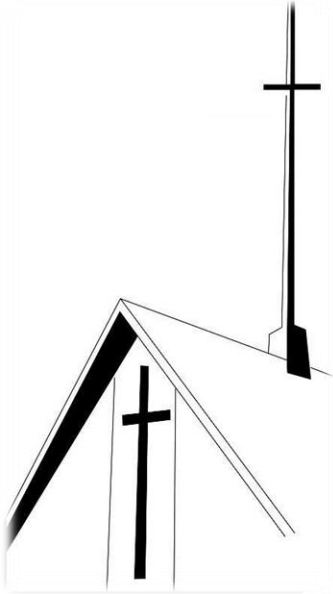
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,

Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Postlude

Cheryl Strecker

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



**Next Week:**  
**The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost**

*Readings:*

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Psalm 37:1-9

Luke 17:5-10

**Theme: Small Faith, Big Outcomes**

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

1011 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

[www.communityunited.church](http://www.communityunited.church)





## Community United Church

**The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God and donated by  
Ginnie Burger in celebration of her birthday. We celebrate with you!**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- October 1: Love Wins Book and Bible Study #1 – 6:30-8:00 PM in Fellowship Hall
- October 8: Spirits & Spirituality. This month at Calamari's at 7:00 PM
- October 14: Liberty House – Veterans' Ministry
- October 15: Documentary, *Hellbound?* 7:00 PM

*(see also the Love Wins calendar insert in this bulletin)*

### 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:**

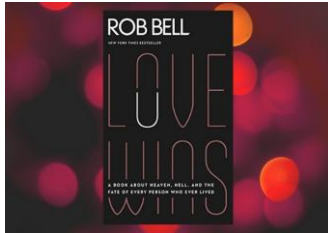
Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, Ethel Davis,  
Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Toni Stevenson, Dave Woledge, Dorothy Moyer,  
The Vadzemnieks Family, Sharon Cooper, Sandra Ganley, Celeste Peck,  
Linda Foll Johnson, Todd Carrier, The Kuzma Family, Debra Jackman

### **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](mailto:mpruzinsky@icloud.com)

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## Love Wins Study & Series 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? Opening Night
October 29:	Evening Small Group Discussion
October 30:	Morning Small Group Discussion

### November 2025

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: Living in Waiting

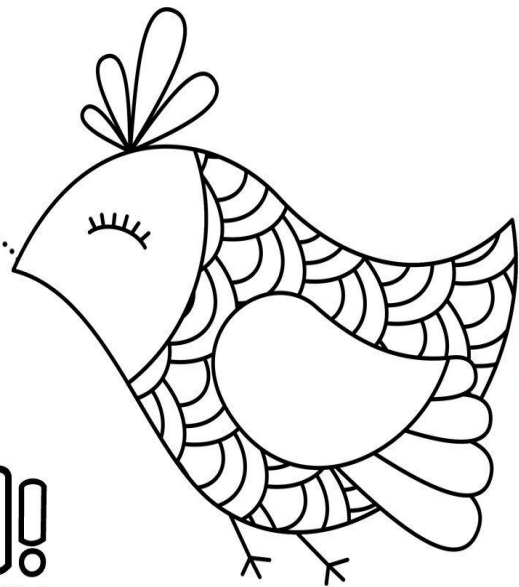
**Let everything**



**that has  
breath**

**praise  
the Lord!**

**Psalm 150:6**



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