

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



September 7, 2025

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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!*

Prelude

“Wild Mountain Time” / “Blessed”  
Cheryl Strecker, Chris & Julie Moore, Bob Martin

Welcome, Prayer Requests, and Announcements

Centering Music

“I Stand in Awe” #53

You are beautiful beyond description, too marvelous for words;  
Too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard.  
Who can grasp your infinite wisdom? Who can fathom the depth of your love?  
You are beautiful beyond description, majesty enthroned above.  
And I stand, I stand in awe of you, I stand, I stand in awe of you;  
Holy God, to whom all praise is due, I stand in awe of you.

*(Repeat All)*

Invocation:

One: Holy and loving God, by the power and presence of your Holy Spirit, heaven and earth meet in this place. Together with all the angels and saints, we bring our adoration and worship, as you are the Holy One, our hope and our mercy.

**All: Open to your presence, O God, we ask that your wisdom transform our hearts and minds. We ask that your love bring wholeness and restoration to every part of our lives, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen!**

\*Opening Hymn

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” #59

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,  
Stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,  
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother—all who live in love are thine;  
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;  
Love divine is reigning o’er us, joining all within its span.  
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;  
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

## \* 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 Book of Deuteronomy 30:15-20

"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away and you do not hear but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today that you shall certainly perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him, for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

### Responsorial

### Psalm 1

One: Happy are those who do not follow the advice of wickedness or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers, but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on God's law they meditate day and night.

**All: They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.**

One: The ways of wickedness are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore, wickedness will not stand in the judgement nor sinfulness in the congregation of the righteous.

**All: For the LORD watches over the ways of the righteous, but the ways of wickedness will perish. 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 14:25-33**

Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

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**

“Goodness is Stronger than Evil” #296

Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;  
Light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.  
Victory is ours, victory is ours through him who loved us.  
Victory is ours, victory is ours through him who loved us.

*(Repeat)*

### **Message**

*Priorities in the Reign of God*

Pastor Rich

### **Hymn**

“The Summons” #350 Vv. 1-2

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don’t know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?



## 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

"Now in this Banquet"

Julie, Chris & Bob

## 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**

“Steadfast”

Julie, Chris & Bob

## 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, you created us to be your image bearers, and you gave us the gift and responsibility of *choice*. In all that we face, help us to choose what brings love and abundant flourishing, for us and for all.

**All:** **With you, Christ Jesus, help us to choose what brings restoration, what brings equity, and what brings the presence of God. May we be so consumed by the light of your love and wisdom that we freely turn away from all that does not bring heaven to earth. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn      “Love Divine, All Love’s 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:

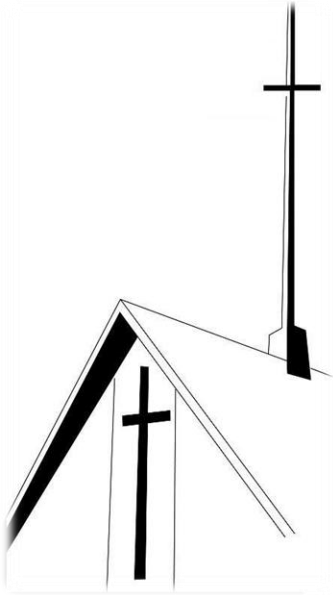
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,

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 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

*Readings:*

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Psalm 51:1-10

Luke 15:1-10

**Theme: The God Who Searches**

***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

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## Community United Church

**The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God and in memory of  
Ginnie Burger's mother's birthday.**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- September 7: Safety and Security training immediately after worship
- September 9: Liberty House
- September 10: Spirits & Spirituality, Andy's Pub, 6:45 PM
- September 17: Resonate, 7:00 PM
- September 21: Service Sunday
- September 23: Ladies Luncheon

### 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)

### **PRAYERS FOR:**

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

### **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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