

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



September 13, 2026

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“The Freedom of Letting Go”

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Welcome and Announcements

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.
(Repeat all)

Invocation

One: Gracious God, you welcome us as we are and gather us into a community shaped by your love.

All: Open us to compassion, deepen our understanding, and make room among us for your grace.

One: When differences arise, guide us to listen with care, honor one another's dignity, and seek the way of peace.

All: Enlarge our hearts, strengthen our courage, and lead us in the freedom of forgiveness.

One: Breathe your Spirit into this worship, that we may grow in mercy, honor conscience, and live with open hands before you.

All: Amen!

***Opening Hymn**

"Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing" #68

Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise His name- I'm fixed upon it—name of God's redeeming love.

Here I raise to thee an altar, hither by thy help I've come;
And I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger, bought me with his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee;
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.

***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

Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. ⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. ⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Responsorial

Psalm 103:1-7, 8-13

One: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

One: The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger for ever.

All: He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

One: As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him. For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

All: The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting.

One: Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word.

All: Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.

One: Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion.

All: Bless the LORD, O my soul. 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 21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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

"Change My Heart, O God" #373

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true.
Change my heart, O God, may I be like you.

You are the Potter, I am the clay;
Mold me and make me,
This is what I pray.
(Repeat first two lines)

Song of Response

“Let it Be”

When I find myself in times of trouble,
(Mother Mary) comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it Be.

And in my hour of darkness,
She is standing right in front of me--
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it Be.

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be,
Whisper words of wisdom, Let it be.

And when the brokenhearted people
Living in the world agree
There will be an answer, Let it Be.

For though they may be parted
There is still a chance that they will see—
There will be an answer, Let it Be.

Let it be, let it be, let it be, Let it be,
There will be an answer, Let it Be.

Celebration of Communion

Pastor: Beloved children of God, come to the table with open hands and love in your hearts, for this is Christ’s table—a place where every person is valued, treated with kindness, and embraced in fairness and love.

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 we take the 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

“O God you Search Me”

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 draw on the Holy Spirit's power within us. We bring forward now the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether they be joys or sorrows.... *(prayer requests are presented)*. We also pray for all who have asked to be on our printed 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 now 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

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 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

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

"You Raise Me Up"

Dan Bainbridge
Cheryl Strecker

Offertory 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: As we depart, may we carry with us the spaciousness of grace and the freedom to meet each new day with open hearts.

All: May wonder widen our vision and grace reveal paths we have not yet imagined.

One: May we delight in the gifts of one another, welcome the wisdom found in difference, and trust the love that draws us forward.

All: Renewed by hope and surrounded by mercy, we go in peace, free to grow and free to begin anew. Amen.

***Blessing**

***Closing Hymn** “Rejoice, the Lord is King!” #342 v. 1,2,4

Rejoice the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing, and triumph evermore.

Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

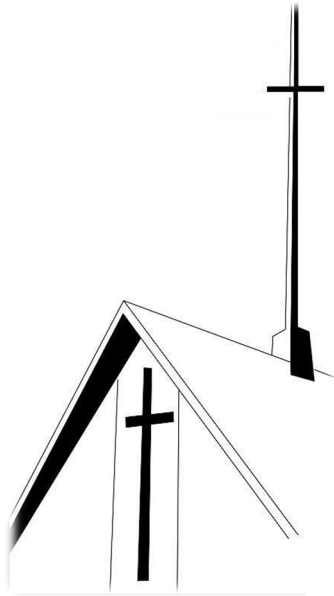
Our Savior, Jesus, reigns, the God of truth and love;
When he had purged our stains, he took his seat above:

Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope for Christ the Judge shall come
To gather all his saints to their eternal home:

Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

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



**Next Week:
Sunday, September 20, 2026
11:00 AM**

Readings:
Exodus 16:2-15
Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Matthew 20:1-6

Theme: Enough for Today

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508
(814) – 864 – 4429

www.communityunited.church

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com



Community United Church

The flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Carol Rodgers in loving memory of her Mother, Florence Kurty, upon her heavenly birthday. The additional arrangement is given to the glory of God by Pastor Joy in honor of Dina's upcoming birthday.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sept. 15: Women's Outreach Group – 11 AM Community Building Conversations, 12 PM Luncheon
Sept. 19: **CUC Craft Show and Bake Sale – 9 AM - 2 PM**
Sept. 20: Service Sunday
Sept. 21: CUC COUNCIL MEETING 6:30 pm

***Need hearing assistance? We have four available devices to enhance your worship experience!
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),
Aran Maloney (Air National Guard), and Connor Bille (Army)

PRAYERS FOR:

Linda Hilbert, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Ethel Davis, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin,
Toni Stevenson, Sandra Ganley, Dorothy Moyer, Celeste Peck, Linda Foll Johnson, Debra Jackman,
Zoey Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Veronica, Joan Schultz, Michelle and Melissa, Tom and Thea Hyatt,
Randy Koziol, Barbara Thompson, Tanisha and Jaeda, Barbara Hickey, Sandy Gool, Jim Haglund, Ruth Zavaglia,
Brad Stewart, Cain Hickey, Zoey Foote, Earl Hall, Patty Brogdan, friends and family of Rosie Goss, friends and
family of Marilyn Pease, Lynn Oliver, Rowan Oliver, Katrina Strohmeier, and Theodore.

Your 2026 Council Members:

Thea Hyatt, President, Ginnie Burger, Vice President, Tracy Applebee Davis, Treasurer,
Juli Tonks, Secretary, Michele Vahey, Justin Graff, and Chuck Becker

We have 2 open Church Council Positions:

Council Member who serves as the liaison to the Worship Committee

Council Member who serves as the liaison to the Education Committee

See any council member, contact the Church Office or just ask somebody about it!

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

Don't forget to check Facebook and our website: **communityunited.church**

Community United Church is committed to ethical and legal compliance

in our music and livestreaming:

CCLI Church Copyright License: 11405428 / Streaming License: 20856761

Please Join in CUC Community-Building Conversations

The Church Profile Committee requests your input as we develop Community United's Local Church Profile following a format recommended by the United Church of Christ.

A Local Church Profile is intended to strengthen the church and guide our future by assembling relevant data and discerning answers to key questions: WHO WE ARE NOW? WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR? WHO IS GOD LEADING US TO BECOME?

The first step in this work is a series of **Community-Building Conversations**. Here's what to know:

Who: You! Everyone in the congregation is encouraged to participate in one conversation session.

What: Community-Building Conversations are small-group discussions intended to collect your input and ideas. They're guided by *Grow Your Church*, a format developed by UCC. Participation is as simple as responding from your heart about the question you draw.

When: An initial round of Community-Building Conversations is scheduled after church on some Sundays at least through September. They begin at about 12:15 p.m. in the Education (Meeting) Room and last about an hour. Please choose a Sunday that works for you and add your name to the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. Six participants are invited to join each week.

What if I can't stay after church: Opportunities to participate in a Community-Building Conversation will be offered on additional days and times. Those conversations will be announced in September.

What else should I know: The conversations are confidential. Ideas and input will be collected without names attached. They'll be analyzed for common themes. Next steps — such additional discussions or surveys — will be determined by the Church Profile Committee in consultation with Church Council.

Questions: Please reach out to **Thea Hyatt, Becky Pomeroy** or another member of the Church Profile Committee:

Jeff Hileman
Ginnie Burger

Juli Tonks
Cheryl Sealy

Tracy Applebee Davis Amy DeYoung
Sean Leonard

If you would like to email: please write to any member, or any church person for that matter, at:

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com

and the message will be forwarded directly to whomever you wish!
All feedback is reviewed and is valuable!

Wanted: Part-Time Administrative Assistant

Are you organized, welcoming, and ready to support the life of the church?

Community United Church is seeking a part-time Administrative Assistant, about 15 hours per week, to help keep our church office organized, welcoming, and connected.

This role supports worship bulletins, church communications, records, office tasks, Council needs, and coordination with ministry teams and volunteers.

The right person will be a member or friend who attends CUC, is detail-oriented, experienced with email and office software, kind in communication, and committed to discretion and confidentiality.

Interested? Send your letter of interest and resume to:

communityunitedchurch@yahoo.com



FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH

2026

Month	Offering/Revenue	Expenses
AUGUST	\$5,735.11	\$7,452.59

2026 Revenue Goal: **\$114,250** (Monthly \$9,520.83)

Please reach out with any questions!

*Thank you for your Contributions to
Community United Church!*