

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



**The Second Sunday after Christmas**

**January 4, 2026**

**11:00 AM**

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy L. Johnson

Centering Music "Jesus, Name Above All Names" #177

Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.  
Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, Living Word.  
*(Repeat All)*

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, through Jesus Christ we believe that we have encountered your divinity in our humanity.

**All: As the scriptures say, "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory." Glory be to God, who has come to us in Christ, remains with us through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns in heaven until all of heaven manifests on the earth. Amen!**

\* Opening Hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" #185

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With the'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel,  
*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.  
*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

**\*Opening Prayer**

**\*Sign of Peace**

One: The peace of Christ be with all of you.

**All: And also with you.**

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

*You may choose to shake hands, hug, or simply acknowledge one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.*

## First Reading

## A Letter to the Ephesians, Attributed to Paul 1:3-14

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. <sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

## Responsorial

## Psalm 147:12-20

One: Extol the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For God strengthens the bars of your gates; God blesses your children within you.

**All: The Holy One grants peace within your borders, God fills you with the finest wheat. The LORD sends out a command to the earth; God's word runs swiftly.**

One: God gives snow like wool; the Holy One scatters frost like ashes. God declares the word to Jacob, God declares statutes and ordinances to Israel.

**All: The Holy One has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know such ordinances. Praise the LORD! 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

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> [The Word] was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who  is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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

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

## Children's Message

### Song

"O Little Town of Bethlehem," #180 Vv. 1-2

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars together proclaim thy holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

Message

*The Mystery and Gift of the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus*

Pastor Rich

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine! O night when Christ was born!  
O night—divine! O night, O night divine!

Truly he taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and his gospel is peace.  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in his name all oppression shall cease.  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raising,  
Let all within us praise his holy name.  
Christ is the Lord! O praise his name forever!  
His power—and glory evermore proclaim!  
His power and glory—evermore proclaim!

### Communion

Pastor: People of God, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

**All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” In Bethlehem we believe God manifested in Christ Jesus to be our living bread, to nourish us forever.**

Pastor: And so, here at this Table we take bread and cup, and we 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—and as the One who is the light in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome.

**All: Here at this Table, we remember that Christ was born into the world to be an outpouring of God’s Love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.**

Pastor: Beloved of God, come to the Table and receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Life.

### Communion Music

“He is Born”

Shelly Conrad



## 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 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 contributions support the church's inclusive ministries as well as initiatives that advance compassion, equity, and community well-being. Thank you!*

**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      "What a Beautiful Name"

Shelly Conrad

## 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: Holy and loving God, through the birth of Christ you fully filled the words of the ancient prophets: that your light and wisdom would come to both the people of Israel and the nations of the world. One humanity, different traditions, yet all gathered around the light of your love.

**All: Through the light of Christmas, remind us to see your face in every human face. By the wisdom you reveal in Christ, remind us to live as the world will be and not as it is—that of the coming world you promise: where death no longer reigns, tears are wiped away, and all are filled with good things. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn

“Carol at the Manger” #199

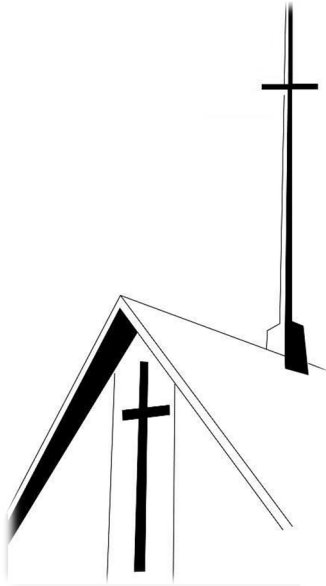
Holy Child within the manger,  
Long ago yet ever near;  
Come as friend to every stranger,  
Come as hope for every fear.  
As you lived to heal the broken,  
Greet the outcast, free the bound,  
As you taught us love unspoken,  
Teach us now where you are found.

Once again we tell the story—  
How your love for us was shown,  
When the image of your glory  
Wore an image like our own.  
Come, enlighten with your wisdom,  
Come and fill us with your grace.  
May the fire of your compassion  
Kindle every land and race.

Holy Child within the manger,  
Lead us ever in your way,  
So we see in every stranger  
How you come to us today.  
In our lives and in our living  
Give us strength to live as you,  
That our hearts might be forgiving  
And our spirits strong and true.



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



**Next Sunday:**  
**The Commemoration of the Epiphany**

**Readings:**

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Matthew 2:1-12

**Theme:**

The Coming of the Magi: Revealing Christ to the World

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect  
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 in joyous celebration of the Christmas Season!**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| January 7:  | Bible Study, Fellowship Hall: 6:30 PM                  |
| January 11: | Sunday Worship Commemoration of the Epiphany, 11:00 AM |
| January 14: | Spirits & Spirituality, 7:00 PM                        |
| January 15: | Crafternoon, 1:30 – 3:30 PM                            |
| January 18: | Service Sunday, 12:30 PM                               |
| January 21: | Resonate, 7:00 PM                                      |
| January 25: | Annual Congregational Meeting & Potluck, 12:00 PM      |

### **NEW MEMBERSHIP:**

*If you are interested in becoming a formal member of the church, please see one of the pastors for more information.*

### **Reminder to Save the Date! Sunday, January 25, 2026:**

**New Member Sunday (11:00 AM), Annual Congregational Meeting (12:00 PM), and CUC Potluck Dinner (12:30 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:**

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:**

Linda Hilbert, 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, Rose Goss,  
Cathie Witmire, Laura Will, Michael, Erin Mrenak, Paul Dietz, Ruth Schmidt

### **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)*

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