

# Community United Church

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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



**The Third Sunday of Advent**

**December 17, 2023**

**11:00 AM**

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

Centering Music                    “O Come, All Ye Faithful” #182, Vs. 1

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;  
*O Come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

Invocation

One: People of God, hear again the good news of prophets and angels: God sends Christ into the world to be light, life, and love!

**All: As we approach Christ’s birth in Bethlehem, we are reminded that God comes into the world in humble form—and does so to bring all of creation into glory. 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 th’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 th’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 greet one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)*

## **Advent Candles: Week III – JOY**

*We invite all young people present to come forward to light our Advent candles!*

### **Advent Song**

“Wait for the Lord” #166

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart! *(Sing 3x)*

### **First Reading**

**The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me; God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display God’s glory. <sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. <sup>9</sup> Their descendants shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my whole being shall exult in my God, for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation; God has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

### **Music Ministry**

“Dona Nobis Pacem”

Community United Bell Choir

### **Responsorial**

**Psalm 126**

One: When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

**All: Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”**

One: The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the desert.

**All: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their harvest of blessing. 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 1:39-56**

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name; <sup>50</sup>indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup>He has come to the aid of his child Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

<sup>56</sup>And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

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

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

Message

*The Coming Revolution of God:  
Mary’s Prophecy*

Pastor Rich

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.



### Communion

- Pastor: People of God, the scriptures say that Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- All: Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Into Bethlehem we believe God manifested in Christ Jesus to be our living bread, to nourish us forever.**
- Pastor: In our time, and in our place, the celebration of Christ’s birth happens in the cold and darkness of winter.
- All: The darkness requires us to seek out light, to see where we are going. The cold requires us to seek warmth for our very lives. Scripture and season both point to our need for communion with the One who can be our light, our warmth, and our food for life.**
- 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.

## **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 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 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.*

***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.***

**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, which can be addressed to the church at:*

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

**Ministry of Music**

**"Be Born in Me"**

**Dina Johnson**

**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, through the prophetic words of Isaiah and Mary, we are reminded that the Reign of God brings abundance, justice, and fulfillment for *all people*.

**All: May the wisdom of your Holy Spirit also come through us—that we might not only proclaim the Gospel, but live into its values, and by doing so, to heal and transform the world. Amen!**

\*Blessing

\*Closing Hymn                    “It Came upon the Midnight Clear” #191

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven’s all gracious King:”  
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,  
And ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,  
When, with the ever-circling years, shall come the time foretold,  
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
And all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.



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



**Next Sunday, December 24, 2022:**  
**11:00 AM**

**The Fourth Week of Advent:**

Titus 3:4-7

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Matthew 1:18-25

Theme:

*Faith-Filling Dreams –  
Joseph's Calling*

**Christmas Eve Service – 8:00 PM**

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm 98

Hebrews 1:1-12

Luke 2:1-20

John 1:1-14

Theme:

*Christ is Born!*

***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 by Nancy Alberico in honor of Becky's birthday.**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- December 17: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent & Service Sunday at 12:00 PM  
December 19: Ladies Lunch (Tureen), 12:00 PM with *optional* \$10 wrapped gift exchange  
December 24: Christmas Eve Service Fourth Sunday of Advent 11:00 AM  
December 24: Christmas Eve Service 8:00 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, 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, Patti Rogers, Celeste Eller & Family, Shirley Carrier,  
Dave Woolege, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt

### **Council Members:**

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