

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



The Third Sunday of Lent

March 23, 2025:

11:00 AM

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty & Pastor Joy Johnson

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

Centering Music

“Step by Step” #494

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.
O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.
I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways;
And step by step you'll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: Holy and loving God, you are always present with us—in times of abundance and progress, as well as in times of oppression and despair. Your invitation is always the same: to eat of the bread you offer, so as to be filled with the hope and love that can never be undone.

All: As we meet you, today, in praise, confession, scripture, sacrament, and prayer, we accept your invitation: to search for you, while you can be found; and to feast on the wisdom and grace you offer us, now and always. Through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

* Opening Hymn

“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” #501

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty—hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield,
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current, land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises—I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

***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.

Confession

One: Holy and loving God, our Lenten journey invites the companionship of honesty: to reflect on our lives, and by your grace, to inspect where we need to grow in our imitation of Christ. For what we have *knowingly* done that lacks the love of heaven:

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

One: For what we have knowingly left *undone*, which has caused others pain:

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

One: Merciful Redeemer, hear our prayers and search the depths of our hearts. Help us to be as gracious to ourselves and to others as you are to each one of us.

All: Help us to learn what it means, O God, that you desire mercy, not sacrifice. And grant us the courage and grace to learn to forgive others, as you forgive us. Amen.

Lenten Meditation & Candles

Song of Reflection

“Jesus Remember Me” #285

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

(Sing Three Times)



First Reading

The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 55:1-9

Hear, everyone who thirsts; come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your earnings for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Now you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. ⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Responsorial

Psalm 63:1-8

One: O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

All: I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

One: My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

All: For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Amen!

*Lenten Acclamation

“Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights” #250 V. 1

Throughout these Lenten days and nights we turn to walk the inward way,
Where meeting Christ, our guide and light, we live in hope till Easter Day.

*Gospel

Luke 13:1-9

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.” ⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

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

“Nothing Can Trouble” #421

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
God alone fills us.

(Repeat)

Song of Response

"Blest Are They" #666

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

Chorus:

Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!

Rejoice and be glad!

Yours is the kingdom of God!

Blest are they, the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth.

Blest are they, who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill. *(Chorus)*

Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.

Blest are they, the pure of heart, they shall see God. *(Chorus)*

Blest are they who seek peace. They are the children of God.

Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs. *(Chorus)*

Blest are you who suffer hate, all because of me.

Rejoice be glad, yours is the kingdom; shine for all to see. *(Chorus)*



COMMUNION LITURGY

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

"Ave Verum Corpus"

Cheryl Strecker

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

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 the last page of the bulletin]*. 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

Our offerings are 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.

Planned-giving of even 1% can be transformational!

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

“Take Me to the King”

Katie Schaaf

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*Lenten Congregational Response #576

***Make me a servant, humble and meek.
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak!
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant! Make me a servant!
Make me a servant today!***

*Departing Prayer

One: Holy and loving God, in a world too often filled with trouble, tragedy, and pain, you promise us that there is a peace that surpasses all understanding; and that wherever we see chaos, we can join with you in the work of creation and redemption.

All: Today we choose to be touchpoints of your promise, O God. Where there is pain, we will bring comfort. Where there is injustice, we will be a shield to the oppressed and a voice for the voiceless. Where there is isolation, we will bring community—all through the power of the Gospel, by which we live as the Body of Christ. Amen!

* Blessing

*Closing Hymn

“We Praise You, O God” #726

We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring;
We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
We bless your holy name: glad praises we sing.

We worship you, God of our fathers and mothers;
Through life’s storm and tempest our guide you have been;
When perils o’er take us, you never forsake us,
And with your help, O Lord, our battles we win.

With voices united our praises we offer,
Our songs of thanksgiving to you we now raise;
Your strong arm will guide us, our God is beside us,
To you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!



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



Next Sunday:

11:00 AM

Readings:

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Psalm 32

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**The Fourth Sunday of Lent:
The Mercy of God and New Beginnings**

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

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

www.communityunited.church



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The altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God from Nancy Alberico

THIS WEEK:

March 25: The Ladies Luncheon will be Tuesday, March 25 at 12:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. It will be a potluck luncheon, but if you prefer to bring your own, that's okay too! Please let Carol Rodgers know if you can attend.

REMINDERS:

- **Easter Flowers** (Lillie, Tulips, and Hyacinths) sign-up today and next Sunday. \$8.50 per potted arrangement. Payment requested at signup.
- The Women's Outreach Ministry is still **collecting hairbrushes** for the Overnight Shelter.
- Need **hearing assistance**? We have four available units. Please talk to our tech crew in the back of the sanctuary.
- Have you signed up for **Small Group discussion** opportunities to continue our discernment for **church growth and stewardship**? See signup sheet in the Fellowship Hall.

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:

Darek Baksik, Laura Will, Keith Vargeson, Joyce Kneidel, Dorothy Moyer, Anna Silvia, Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Ralph Kester, John M., Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Tammy McIntyre, Debra Doerfer & David Magid, Annette Minich, Dave Pakulski, Ethel Davis, Chelsea Brown, Celeste Eller & Family, Michele Serafin, Linda Foll-Johnson, Toni Stevenson, Dave Wooledge, Ev Smith, Karis Fenton, Ruth Schmidt, Carol & Doug Rodgers, Jane Moran, Josh Cook & Danny Kaeberlein, The Vadzemnieks Family, Doug Moore, Reverend Susan Strouse & Reverend Barbara Peronteau, and John & Tina Schnarrs

Current Council Members:

Mike Pruzinsky (President), Debbie Anderson (Vice President), Melanie Vadzemnieks (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

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