

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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



August 23, 2026

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“On This Rock: The Courage to be Real”

Pastor Joy L. Johnson

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

Centering Music

"Through it All" #452

Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God;
Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to depend upon God's Word.
(Repeat)

Invocation

One: "Who do you say I am?"

All: Some say Messiah, some say "Human One."

One: "Who do you say I am?"

All: Some say Emmanuel, God-with-us, some say Wisdom, Teacher of Truth. Some say Ruler of Peace, Bringer of Justice.

One: Community United Church, Who do you say I am?

All: You are the Body to which we belong; we are Your people, needed and treasured. In You we are transformed into Your Hope, Your Love, Your Vision. You are the One we long for, seek today, and who empowers our lives.

One: Come, let us worship!

All: Amen!

***Opening Hymn**

"How Can I Keep from Singing?" #424

My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.

Refrain

**No storm can shake my in-most calm while to that Rock I'm clinging,
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?**

Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?

(Refrain)

What though my joys and comforts die? The Lord my Savior liveth.
What though the darkness gather round? Songs in the night he giveth.

(Refrain)

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing!
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from singing?

(Refrain)

***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

Isaiah 51:1-6

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah, who bore you, for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. ³ For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ⁴ Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation, for a teaching will go out from me and my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵ I will bring near my deliverance swiftly; my salvation has gone out, and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look at the earth beneath, for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats, but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

Responsorial

Psalm 124

One: If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when our enemies attacked us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us;

All: then the flood would have swept us away; the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters.

One: Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the hunters; the snare is broken, and we have escaped.

All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 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 16:13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

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

"Awesome God" #658

3X

Our God is an awesome God, who reigns from heaven above
With wisdom, power, and love—our God is an awesome God!

Message

On This Rock: The Courage to Be Real

Pastor Joy

Hymn of Response

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" #405

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain

**On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand: all other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.

(Refrain)

His oath, his covenant, his blood, support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay.

(Refrain)

When he shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in him be found:
Dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

(Refrain)





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 "My Jesus I love Thee/I Love you Lord" medley 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 in God's presence. Holy and Loving God, we come before you, carrying all that we are. We now bring before you the prayers of this community: *(prayer requests are presented.)* For these prayers, and for all we hold in silence, we trust in your loving care.

All: **God, hear our prayer.**

One: Let us continue in prayer, offering to God what rests quietly within us: *(silent prayers are offered.)* Gracious God, take what we bring, even when it feels small, and use it for your work of love in the world. Help us recognize your abundance, share your compassion, and continue the ministry of Jesus by making room for all at the table. 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

"Come Healing"

Julie Lokahi, Emily Bahm
Patrick Thiem

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: Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered with courage: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

All: Give us that same courage to be real before You: honest in our faith, humble in our questions, and willing to stand on Christ, the Rock of our lives. Amen!

***Blessing**

***Closing Hymn** "God of Grace and God of Glory" #569 v.1,3,4

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your power;
Crown your ancient Church's story, bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour,
For the facing of this hour.

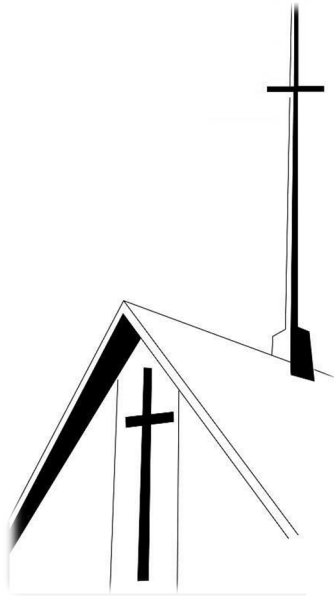
Heal your children's warring madness, bend our pride to your control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage lest we miss your kingdom's goal,
Lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of your salvation be our glory ever more.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore,
Serving you whom we adore.

*Until we meet again, remember: you are
loved.*

Postlude

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



**Next Week:
Sunday, August 30, 2026
11:00 AM**

Readings:
Romans 12:9-21
Psalm 26:1-8
Matthew 16:21-28

Theme: Let Love Be Genuine: The Courage to Follow

***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 altar flowers this morning are given to the glory of God by Linda Weber in honor and memory of both parents' birthdays.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- August 23: Community Building Small Group Activity after Service Today! If you haven't signed up for an upcoming session yet, please do so. It is fun and engaging!
- Sept. 8: Liberty House Veterans' Ministry dinner –sign up to provide and/or participate!

SAVE THE DATE: CUC Craft Show September 19th

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, family and friends of Lorre Rapp, 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

Your 2026 Council Members:

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

We have 2 open Church Council Positions: Please see any Council Member or Pastor Joy for information about the role of a Council Member. You would serve as a representative of the congregation!

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 Sundays through September, except for Service Sunday September 20th. They begin at about 12:15 p.m. in the Education 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.



*Thank you for your support of
Community United Church during
Erie Gives and always!*