



Unsplash Photo by Karson

“Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own – indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come.”

**-Wangari Maathai, Founder of the Green Belt Movement;
First African woman to receive the Noble Peace Prize**

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 18, 2024, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcomed here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude "There Is a Balm" arr. C. B. Putnam

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit "Salaam" M. Samir (Egypt)

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God to every race.

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God in every place.

* Call to the Heart Ed Vickery
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worshiping, reading, and singing...

One: We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another.

Many: **To heal and protect God's creation, to stand together against all threats to life.**

One: We have come to discover the beauty of God's creation.

Many: **The sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life.**

One: We have come to listen to the music of the universe.

Many: **Water flowing over rocks, the wisp and howling of the wind, raindrops pattering on the roof.**

One: We have come to be open to the many ways God speaks to us through the beauty of creation.

Many: **In our worship, may we have reverence and seek to care for all God has created.**

Invocation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

God of land and water, of hope and horizons, we celebrate your presence among us and all your people. You have proclaimed that Jesus was beloved and, tenderly, you have claimed us as your own. Open the skies. Break through the clouds. Fall softly upon our shoulders and say our names with joy. For this day and each day, no matter what the other voices may say, we are your beloved and we rejoice in your inbreaking Kin-dom. Amen!

* Hymn 553

“There Is a Balm in Gilead”

BALM IN GILEAD

Refrain: There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. (*R*)

If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all. (*R*)

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

Please join me in this unison prayer of transformation for new life...

Creator God, you have created a world of community, richness, and love. Yet we take this world for granted at times, buying into human greed. Greed which brings separation, destruction, and injustice. As we seek to satisfy our own needs, we can diminish the earth and the needs of others. We collectively pray for a change of heart and a change of practice, so all your people and all your world may flourish. Amen.

Song of Response

LET US BREAK BREAD

When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
My God, have mercy on me.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Jesus used God's creation to show people his ways and the profound love God had for them. Jesus spoke of wandering sheep, flying sparrows, and the smallest of mustard seeds. He stilled raging storms, pulled coins from the mouths of fish, and spit into the dirt to make mud that would heal people. He was connected to creation, and he drew life from creation. Through the grace of God may we follow in his ways so we too know a wonderful love for the earth, seeking to sustain and preserve its splendor, so all its gifts may be fully known.

Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,
And to the Christ, whose grace has pardoned me,
And to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

World without end, without end, Amen. (3x)
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

Black Christian History

Terrence Hayes

During each Sunday of Black History Month, we will recognize someone of African American descent who has contributed to the theology and breath of the Christian faith. Today we celebrate the contributions and achievements of Amanda Berry Smith, the “Washerwoman Evangelist.”

Amanda Berry Smith

Amanda Berry Smith was born into slavery in Long Green, Maryland in 1837. She was one of eight children and was educated mainly at home with her siblings. She was employed in the early years of her life as a washerwoman to support her family. In 1868, she became connected with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or what is fondly referred to today as the AME Church. Following her second husband's death in 1869, Smith began preaching in churches in New York and New Jersey. She had a rich contralto voice with which she would break out into song when inspired, which made her a person not easily forgotten.

While Smith found most of her success in the AME and other African American churches, she soon became an admirer of white Christian audiences who felt they had clearly heard God's authority and love in her preaching and singing. Although she was not ordained or financially supported by the AME Church or any other organization, she became the first black woman to work as an international evangelist in 1878. She served for twelve years traveling and preaching in places across the world such as England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and various African countries.

Many were forced to acknowledge Smith's influence, not only because of her work in its own churches, but because of the following she built up among white audiences. Racism, however, was clearly an obstacle in her work. There were many restaurants and hotels where she could not stop when traveling, and she was sometimes insulted by members of the white congregations to whom she preached.

After she became well known, she was sometimes asked if she would not prefer to be white, to which she would reply, *"No, we who are the royal black are very well satisfied with His gift to us in this substantial color. I, for one, praise Him for what He has given me, although at times it is very inconvenient."* When her crusade eventually took her to Egypt, the beauty and the strength of the black men and women she saw reinforced her pride in her race, as did her realization that God had chosen Egypt as the hiding place for the infant Jesus and the home of Moses.

After a final trip to England, she returned to America in 1890. In 1892 she moved to the Chicago area, where she opened an "industrial home" for African-American orphans in Harvey, Illinois, where she continued to preach and sing. She wrote a monthly newspaper called, *The Helper*, which supported her fundraising efforts for the school, and she published her autobiography in 1893. In 1912, Amanda Berry Smith retired to Florida, where she eventually died on February 24, 1915.

Amanda Berry Smith was a preacher and missionary, a former slave who became an inspiration to thousands of women both black and white. During her forty-five-year missionary career of arduous travel on four continents, this self-educated former slave and washerwoman became a highly visible and well-respected Christian leader despite intense opposition to women in public ministry. And she did this as a Black woman, during the ongoing surge of white racist violence and the tightening grip that segregation had on the country.

Today, Amanda Berry Smith is fondly remembered as the "Washerwoman Evangelist".

Song "I Love the Lord" R. Smallwood
I love the Lord, who heard my cry and pitied every groan.
Long as I live and troubles rise, I'll hasten to God's throne.

I love the Lord, who heard my cry and chased my grief away.
O let my heart no more despair while I have breath to pray.

Song	“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”	K. Medema
	Lord, listen to your children praying. Lord, send your Spirit in this place. Lord, listen to your children praying. Send us love, send us power, send us grace.	

Prayers of the People	Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
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Prayer for Illumination (<i>sung</i>)	NENO LAKE MUNGU (Tanzania)
	Listen, listen, God is calling through the Word inviting, Offering forgiveness, comfort, and joy.

Introduction to Anthem	Meg Houlihan
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Anthem	“Kum ba Yah”	arr. J. Carter
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* Hebrew Lesson	Genesis 9:8-17 (CEB)	Ed Vickery
	<i>Our Hebrew lesson for today comes from the Genesis 9:8-17, where God’s makes a covenant with all of creation...</i>	

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, and with every living being with you—with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God said, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth’s creatures.” God said to Noah, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth.”

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

The Good News	“God’s Rainbow Promise”	Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
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Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

There is no doubt the earth is a giving planet. Everything we need to survive and thrive is provided by the world around us: food, water, medicine, materials for shelter, and even the natural cycles of seasonal change. We live right within the gift of an ecosystem that continues to give and give. As we are reminded of what nature gives free-of-charge, let us share our gifts with God just as openly, freely, and naturally.

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord.

Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...

God of nature, use what was shared this day to create an ecosystem of love. To stop and hinder the pollution that is racism, bigotry, and hate. Use these gifts to plant seeds to hope, pollinate joy, and provide the fresh water of new life. May they become part of the welcome and acceptance that is our biodiversity and contribute to a change of climate we can live with. A climate of heart, healing, and eternal wholeness in God. Amen.

* Hymn

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

SOJOURNER

I want Jesus to walk with me. (2x)

All along my pilgrim journey, oh, I want Jesus to walk with me.

When I'm troubled, Lord, walk with me. (2x)

When my head is bowed in sorrow, oh, I want Jesus to walk with me

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Benediction Response

“We Will Walk with God”

SIZOHAMBA NAYE (Swaziland)

We will walk with God, my brothers; we will walk with God.

We will walk with God, my sisters; we will walk with God.

We will go rejoicing till the kingdom has come.

We will go rejoicing till the kingdom has come.

Postlude

“Deep River”

arr. T. Osman

Songs in this service are used by permission.

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Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written and adapted by UCC Worship Ways, Mongabay (a U.S. based non-profit conservation and environmental science news platform), and Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published, please contact the church office by phone or email.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Anne Hayes, Kevin Edwards-Knight, Jo Ann Jellison, Shakti Subramanian

We welcome all in our congregation to participate! Do you like talking to interesting people and being helpful? **Greeters and ushers, liturgists and readers are needed** starting at 10:30 every Sunday. Please sign up in the Gathering Room or on the **SignUpGenius** link:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Stay connected! There are many new events in our future! Check out all the current happenings in the weekly newsletter via Constant Contact.

Not seeing it in your inbox? Sign-up here:
<https://holycovenantucc.org/newsletters/>

MINISTRY TEAM FAIR, MARCH 3

On Sunday, March 3 after worship there will be tables set up in the Gathering Room and each table will feature one of our Ministry Teams. There will be team reps providing information about what the different teams do and various ways that you can participate. This is a great opportunity to connect with other church members and to make a difference in the Charlotte community. Rumor has it there will be snacks and swag!

CONFRONTING WHITENESS BEGINNING MARCH 3

We're planning for our next group to start March 3rd, 3-4:30pm, a 9-week class session, held by Zoom on Sunday afternoons. Join fellow church members to engage in "a new conversation about race and racism that helps members of White-dominant churches and institutions identify their own racial history and wrestle with what it means to be White." The cost is \$150 per person, plus \$25 for the study guide book. Members of color participate at no cost. Financial scholarships are available-don't let cost keep you from signing up. Please complete this quick form. <https://forms.gle/XR7Anu9GGic2oHDv8>. For further information contact Meg Houlihan (megmhoulihan@gmail.com). Brought to you by the Racial Justice and Equity (RJE) Committee.

WORSHIP VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP

Volunteers needed also for Maundy Thursday (03/28/24) evening worship service! We welcome all in our congregation to participate in worship leadership. **Greeters and ushers are needed** starting at 10:30am every Sunday. Liturgists and readers roles are also available. **Please sign up in the Gathering Room or using SignUpGenius:**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>.

Download the SignupGenius app to make signing up even easier!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/mobileapp>

FOR OUR KIDDOS

The Christian Ed team has put together some packets for kids who find themselves in church for the whole hour and need some activity. The packets for our "regulars" will have their names on them. Packets for others will specify "non-reader" or "young reader", based on instructions to be read in the latter. The packets will include crayons and will be at the usher station.

SOJOURNERS CLASS

The Sojourners will begin a book study of *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for our Own* by Eddie S. Gaude, Jr. We will begin by discussing the Introduction this Sunday, February 18. We hope that you will join us, and preparation is not essential. We gather Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjIiNkF5QT09>; Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

NIKOLE HANNAH JONES (1619 PROJECT) - DAVIDSON COLLEGE, FEB. 27

A powerful discussion of history, race, and democracy that speaks directly to our current moment. Drawing on ideas from The 1619 Project, she reframes our

understanding of American history, highlights the contributions of Black Americans, and illuminates key moments of struggle and resistance. Free event, tickets limited to 2.

<https://www.davidson.edu/events/evening-nikole-hannah-jones-conversation-about-truth-history-and-1619-project>

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Alice Phelan & Sally Young, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry Rhyne, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Sharon Chevrrior (Kathleen Wagner), Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Chuck Anderson (Kathleen Wagner), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), Debra Johnson (Diane Neese), Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Gary Kaczmarek (Diane Neese), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Roxanne & Moose Meyer (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovic), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovic), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Beth Smith, Kathy Stewart (Diane Neese), Joyce Tyler (Bill Tyler), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
prayers@holycovenantucc.org.