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Resilience

“It is not easy to live life sometimes.

To face the world with a smile when you’re crying inside.

It takes a lot of courage to reach down inside yourself, hold on to that strength and know that tomorrow is a new day with new possibilities. But if you can just hold on long enough to see this through and trust that you can survive this; you’ll come out a new person – stronger and as long as you don’t give up and keep pushing forward, no matter how hopeless things seem, you WILL make it.”

– Kathy Obara

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

September 3, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude "In This Very Room" R. C. Harris

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Jeffery Edwards-Knight

One: May the peace of Christ be with you!

Many: And also with you.

Introit "Gather Us In" M. Haugen

**Here in this place, the new light is streaming,
Shadows of doubt are vanished away.
See in this space our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.**

**Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
Gather us in; our spirits inflame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken;
We shall arise at the sound of our name.**

* Call to Worship Dawn Schmitz

One: We are being called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ!

Many: **The good news of love, peace, and justice for all!**

One: Jesus lays before us a path in which we may follow him.

Many: **God, guide us as we humbly seek to follow this path of service.**

One: It's not going to be easy; there will be challenges along the path.

Many: **God, help us to face these difficulties with the power of our faith.**

One: Some will misunderstand and resist hearing this good news.

Many: **God, when this occurs, may we be as resilient and persistent as Jesus was. We now worship in the collective movement toward beloved community.**

** Please take a comfortable posture that supports your
worshiping, reading, and singing.*

* Invocation (*responsive*)

Dawn Schmitz

Holy One, as we gather today make each of us an instrument of your justice. Work to weave us into one family, your kin-dom. Bless our uniqueness and differences, sustaining us with the courage to stand together in the face of injustice. We call on you today to gather us in your love. To impart to us the understanding we need to better know you and go where you are calling us to serve. As we worship, we commit ourselves to proclaiming your love and grace to all the world.

One: Let the world know where there is oppression...

Many: **We will seek liberation!**

One: Where there is injustice...

Many: **We will seek justice!**

One: Where there is hate...

Many: **We will seek love!**

* Hymn

“We Gather Here In Jesus’ Name”

COME SHARE THE LORD

We gather here in Jesus’ name.

Christ’s love is burning in our hearts like living flame.

For through Christ’s sacrifice, the whole wide world unites.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs.

Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs.

Christ joins us here and breaks the bread.

Our God who pours the cup is risen from the dead.

The one we love the most is now our gracious host.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

We are now a family of which our God is Head.

Though unseen, Christ meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

We’ll gather soon, in glory rise.

We’ll see the wonder of our God and of our Christ.

Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait.

Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*)

Dawn Schmitz

One: As we gather in worship, let us take this moment to consider our needs for transformation and forgiveness.

Many: **Good and loving God, we are your body, heart, and spirit here on earth. As your disciples, we are called to spread the good news of love and justice in the world before us. But our drive for the kin-dom, a shared society of equals who serve each other, often causes us to experience discomfort. The challenges we face along the way can dissipate our motivation, and we can find ourselves giving in to the world as it is, and not as you would have it be. Forgive us for our humanity and apathy as we seek transformation for the work of your ministry. Amen.**

Response 544 (*sung*)

CAMACUA

**If I have been the source of pain, O God;
If to the weak I have refused my strength;
If, in rebellion, I have strayed away; Forgive me, God.**

Words of Assurance

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Just as Jesus provided his disciples with moments of rest and renewal, it is good for us to spend time in the loving presence of God. As we take time to commune with God, we who are weary are energized, we who are hurt are healed, and we who feel alone are brought into community. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit lifts us in such assurance as we rise again into Christlikeness. Resurrection is certainly our hope, but as we are transformed, offering it to the world is our duty. Amen.

Response to God's Grace "Know That God Is Good"

MUNGO NI MWEMA

Know that God is good. (3x) God is good; God is good.

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

The Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kin-dom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

OPEN OUR EYES

**Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch you and say that we love you.
Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.**

Hebrew Scripture

Exodus 19:2-8a (CEB)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Our Hebrew Scripture for today comes from the Book of Exodus 19:2-8a (CEB), where God communes with Moses and shares the blessings they will receive...

They traveled from Rephidim, came into the Sinai desert, and set up camp there. Israel camped there in front of the mountain while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, "This is what you should say to Jacob's household and declare to the Israelites: You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to me. So now, if you faithfully obey me and stay true to my covenant, you will be my most precious possession out of all the peoples, since the whole earth belongs to me. You will be a kin-dom of priests for me and a holy nation. These are the words you should say to the Israelites." So Moses came down, called together the people's elders, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all responded with one voice: "Everything that the Lord has said we will do." Moses reported to the Lord what the people said.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church;

Many: **Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.**

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 9:35-10:23 (CEB)

Dawn Schmitz

Our gospel lesson for today comes from Matthew 9:35-10:23 (CEB), where Jesus calls the twelve apostles and speaks of the many hardships they will endure...

Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kin-dom, and healing every disease and every sickness. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest."

He called his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to throw them out and to heal every disease and every sickness. Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, who is called Peter; and Andrew his brother;

James the son of Zebedee; and John his brother; Philip; and Bartholomew; Thomas; and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean; and Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, “Don’t go among the Gentiles or into a Samaritan city. Go instead to the lost sheep, the people of Israel. As you go, make this announcement: ‘The kin-dom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, and throw out demons. You received without having to pay. Therefore, give without demanding payment. Workers deserve to be fed, so don’t gather gold or silver or copper coins for your money belts to take on your trips. Don’t take a backpack for the road or two shirts or sandals or a walking stick. Whatever city or village you go into, find somebody in it who is worthy and stay there until you go on your way. When you go into a house, say, ‘Peace!’ If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if the house isn’t worthy, take back your blessing. If anyone refuses to welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet as you leave that house or city. I assure you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than it will be for that city.

“Look, I’m sending you as sheep among wolves. Therefore, be wise as snakes and innocent as doves. Watch out for people—because they will hand you over to councils and they will beat you in their synagogues. They will haul you in front of governors and even kings because of me so that you may give your testimony to them and to the Gentiles. Whenever they hand you over, don’t worry about how to speak or what you will say, because what you can say will be given to you at that moment. You aren’t doing the talking, but the Spirit of my Father is doing the talking through you. Brothers and sisters will hand each other over to be executed. A father will turn his child in. Children will defy their parents and have them executed. Everyone will hate you on account of my name. But whoever stands firm until the end will be saved. Whenever they harass you in one city, escape to the next, because I assure that you will not go through all the cities of Israel before the Human One comes.

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.**

Sermon

“He Made It Look All So Easy” Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Dawn Schmitz

One: Generous God, our lives are revived as we remember your goodness in it. You have made us in your image and placed in our hearts the memory of Christ's spirit. That memory calls us to give and to embrace your world and its people as we offer our gifts to you. May our lives and faith invested through these offerings seek to create a new reality, a kin-dom where all are welcome and where there is hope for all.

Many: God, whose love knows no ends, we place before you treasures which have come from the heart. Bestow upon us the wisdom to stretch them for the many obligations we have and funnel them towards the places of mission and ministry where your grace, mercy, and love will be known. With giving and hopeful hearts, we pray, Amen.

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, above you heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

One: The Holy One be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

Many: We open our hearts to you, O God.

One: Let us give thanks to God, who gathers us together.

Many: To the One who welcomes us to the table, we give thanks and praise.

One: God, your invitation to come and feast in your presence is but a taste of the love you extend to us every day. By your very nature, you are always seeking us out - searching for ways to connect us and connect with us. You meet us in the most ordinary of places and you make them sacred. By your grace, we come to recognize the holiness that dwells in the world around us, in our neighbors, in our own internal depths. Therefore, we join our voices with your people on earth and the beauty of your creation, singing praise to you,

(sung)

LAND OF REST

**Holy, Holy, Holy One. God of justice and love,
Heaven and earth are full of your wonder. You are here among us.**

One: God, blessed are you and blessed is your eternal table. You welcome all who thirst for justice and hunger to grow in love. You ask us to extend this same welcome to all our neighbors, but God, since our beginning, we have struggled. And so, in your love for us, you took on flesh in Jesus. Through his life, you pointed to your presence on the margins. You revealed the sacredness in all life. You showed us how to live together, even among forces of destruction.

Believing it could transform the world, Jesus proclaimed the good news. He called for the captives to be set free. He spoke openly of the lowly being lifted-up. He talked of the redistribution of wealth and eradicating the causes of poverty. His commitment to practicing love knew no bounds - not even the bounds of death.

Words of Institution

One: On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying:
"This cup that is poured out is the new covenant."

In remembrance of all you have done to liberate us, we proclaim the mystery of our faith...

Many: Christ was birthed among us. Christ was killed among us. Christ rises again among us.

One: God, pour out your Spirit on these gifts. Make these ordinary elements into the sacred gift of your presence with us once again. May they awaken us anew to your everlasting invitation into a life of resurrection. As we partake of them may they enliven us in our pursuit of a world where all needs are met, power is balanced, and the worth of every creature and creation is celebrated.

Music during Communion “God in Your Grace” S. E. Murray
Meg Houlihan, Eric Miner, vocalists

Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: God, by the bread of heaven and the cup of life, you make us one body.
Bind us together by your spirit that we might live into your hopes for us,
a community centered in Christ and rich in compassion, commitment,
courage, and care. May it be so.

Many: **Amen.**

* Hymn “We’ve Come This Far by Faith” arr. R. Smallwood

Refrain:

**We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord,
Trusting in God’s holy Word—God’s never failed us yet.
Oh, can’t turn around, we’ve come this far by faith.**

**Don’t be discouraged with trouble in your life;
God will bear your burdens and remove all misery and strife. (R)**

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response WORLD PEACE PRAYER

**Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe.**

Postlude “Song of Hope” A. Schutmaat
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Portions of this service adapted from Worship Ways: Confrontation: Service Prayers for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ., and from www.LifeinLiturgy.wordpress.com.

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, JoAnn Jellison, Shakti Subramanian

We welcome all in our congregation to participate! Please sign up in the Gathering Room or on the SignUpGenius link:

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



Many thanks to the Pastoral Search Team for providing today's refreshments following worship.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Stay connected! 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/>

WELCOME REV. CZARNECKI WITH ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK, SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

Join us next Sunday, Sept. 10, as we officially welcome Pastor Chris, his wife Akeera, and their children Daveyion, Shanel, and Carter to our Holy Covenant UCC church family and to Charlotte, NC. There will be an All-Church Potluck following worship on Sept. 10. Plan to stay and get to know our new pastor and his family! Bring a dish to share. Please list your items on SignUpGenius link here. Vegan and Vegetarian dishes are welcomed.

SOJOURNERS CLASS

The Sojourners will begin a discussion of the book, *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, on Sept 10. Join us in person or via Zoom, no preparation necessary. We gather at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom Meeting ID: 87673409762 Passcode: 523903. Contact Cheryl Milam for more information, docmilam@hotmail.com.

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Various methods are available for your convenience! Schedule offerings, one time or recurring, through your bank's online payment system. Mailing a check, from home or a financial institution? Please use this secure address:

Holy Covenant UCC, PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

Donate online at HolyCovenantUCC.org/give-2/. Look for the Give Today button. Questions can be directed to the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org or 704-599-9810.



PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Family and friends in the death of Sherryl Stogner

Linda Carver, Gary & Linda Clark, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Ed & Beth Sharp, Cynthia & Tommy Simpson, Bill Seaman, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Karen & Billy (Kim Tyler), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Roxanne & Moose Meyer (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Sue Parrish (Terry Raley-Dennis), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Susan Rayfield (Martha Bomely), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Tom & Silvia Smith (Laura Hankins), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), 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.

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