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## Withstanding All Things

“You can do something. You can, even for one person. Don’t turn away, help. Because those who suffer, often suffer not because of the person or the group that inflicts the suffering; they seem to suffer because nobody cares.”

– Elie Wiesel

“Don’t Look away. Don’t look down.  
Don’t pretend not to see hurt.  
Look people in the eye.  
Even when their pain is overwhelming.  
And when you’re hurting and in pain,  
find the people who can look you in the eye.”

– Brene Brown

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

September 10, 2023 10:55 am

Prelude "Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart" arr. S. Nielson

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 Kristin Andes

One: Come! Join the fellowship of God's people. A people who gathers as disciples of Christ.

Many: **We seek the One who frees us from uncertainty and doubt.**

One: Come! Join the welcome of God's people. A people who seeks justice and peace.

Many: **We seek the One who can bring liberation and reconciliation.**

One: Come! Join the celebration of God's people. A people who believes in the hope of a vast kin-dom here on earth.

Many: **We seek to follow Christ and live in his hope, life, and faith. Into this time of worship we now go, and out into the world will the message of God's all-encompassing love flow.**

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

\* Invocation (*unison*)

Kristin Andes

Blessed Spirit, who is closer to us than our own breath, we seek to be in relationship with you. As we worship help us to be aware of your constant presence and to follow your ways. To listen closely for the still small voice which speaks to us and guides us. Within the inner chambers of our hearts and minds, be the source of divine inspiration which moves us from doubt to belief, uncertainty to clarity, and fear to places of love. As you reside within us, may we pause and rest in the unceasing existence of you. Amen.

\* Hymn 290

“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”

MORECAMBE

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;  
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as you are,  
And make me love you as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,  
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,  
No angel visitant, no opening skies;  
But take the dimness of my soul away.

Have you not bid us love you every way?  
All, all your own: soul, heart, and strength, and mind;  
I see your cross - there teach my heart to stay:  
O let me seek you, and O let me find.

Teach me to feel that you are always nigh;  
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,  
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;  
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love you as your angels love,  
One holy passion filling all my frame;  
The baptism of the heaven descended dove,  
My heart an altar, and your love the flame.

Prayer for Transformation & New Life (*unison*) Kristin Andes  
Loving God, in whom we live and move and have our being - you call us to journey with you - in love, in power, in healing, through conflict, in boldness, and speaking truth to the powers that be - even the powers that threaten our very lives. When those powers threaten us, we become afraid, for our lives, of tarnishing our reputations, or losing friends and family. At times we turn away from identifying with the marginalized and oppressed, afraid to be singled out as different, unusual, or those loving queer Christ-followers. In doing so, we forget your promise to watch over us and care for us. We forget the power of the Christ which resides within us and the welcoming community that surrounds us and uplifts us. Forgive us for our fear, for turning away and hiding instead of shining. Amen.

Response 544 (*sung*)

CAMACUA

If I have spoken words of cruelty;  
If I have left some suffering unrelieved;  
Condemn not my insensitivity; Forgive me, God.

Words of Assurance

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

In Christ, we are fully welcomed as we are. Bearing our wounded hearts and the scars of our fearful thoughts. Yet the love and healing of Christ is a power that transforms and empowers us anew. As we rise again into Christlikeness, scarcity can be seen as abundance, fear is exchanged with faith, and hardened hearts can become open hands. Stir us into the assurance of this grace and the resurrecting truth we are to embody. 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

Special Music

"In Christ Alone"  
*Eric Miner, vocalist*

S. Craig & D. Koch

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

Jeremiah 20:7-13 (*CEB*)

Terrence Hayes

Our Hebrew Scripture for today comes from the Book of Jeremiah 20:7-13, where Jeremiah laments about how close he is to quitting because of the mockery he suffers...

Lord, you enticed me, and I was taken in. You were too strong for me, and you prevailed. Now I'm laughed at all the time; everyone mocks me. Every time I open my mouth, I cry out and say, "Violence and destruction!" The Lord's word has brought me nothing but insult and injury, constantly. I thought, I'll forget him; I'll no longer speak in his name. But there's an intense fire in my heart, trapped in my bones. I'm drained trying to contain it; I'm unable to do it. I hear many whispering— "Panic Lurks Everywhere!— proclaim, yes, let's proclaim it ourselves!" All my friends are waiting for me to stumble: "Perhaps he can be enticed. Then we'll prevail against him and get our revenge on him!" But the Lord is with me like a strong defender. Therefore, my oppressors will stumble and not prevail. They will be disgraced by their own failures. Their dishonor will never be forgotten. The Lord of heavenly forces tests the righteous and discerns the heart and the mind. Let me see your retribution upon them, for I have committed my case to you. Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has rescued the needy from the clutches of evildoers.

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

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

Our primary scripture for today comes from the Gospel of Matthew 10:24-39, where Jesus speaks of the difficulties and troubles that lie ahead for the disciples...

Disciples aren't greater than their teacher, and slaves aren't greater than their master. It's enough for disciples to be like their teacher and slaves like their master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, it's certain that they will call the members of his household by even worse names. Therefore, don't be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that won't be revealed, and nothing secret that won't be brought out into the open. What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops. Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Aren't two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already. Even the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But everyone who denies me before people, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. Don't think that I've come to bring peace to the earth. I haven't come to bring peace but a sword. I've come to turn a man *against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. People's enemies are members of their own households.* Those who love father or mother more than me aren't worthy of me. Those who love son or daughter more than me aren't worthy of me. Those who don't pick up their crosses and follow me aren't worthy of me. Those who find their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives because of me will find them.

**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

“Disciples Don't Walk Away”

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving

Kristin Andes

**One:** When Jesus called his disciples, he told them sacrifices were going to be needed if the mission of God's kin-dom here on earth was going to be fulfilled. His disciples were asked to leave their families and belongings behind, and implicitly trust God was going to provide for

their every need. In this trust they were able to freely give of themselves, not just to the mission but to the ministries in which they served. Let us now share our own gifts in the same faith and trust.

**Many:** God, who is the sustainer of all that is, we humbly share with you a portion of our time, talent, and treasures. As part of the body of Christ, we cannot turn away from our responsibility in creating your kin-dom here on earth. Use what we have freely shared today for the purpose of creating a more loving, peaceful, and just world for all your people. In this giving spirit 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.**

\* Hymn

“Seek Ye First”

LAFFERTY

**Seek ye first the kin-dom of God and its righteousness,  
And all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu, alleluia!**

**Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find;  
Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you. Allelu, alleluia!**

**You shall not live by bread alone, but by every word  
That proceeds from the mouth of God. Allelu, alleluia!**

\* Reading by *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Kristin Andes

To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, his enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that his followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed a narrow way. The way is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it. If we regard this way as one we follow in obedience to an external command, if we are afraid of ourselves all the time, it is indeed an impossible way. But if we behold Jesus Christ going on before step by step, we shall not go astray.

\* 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

“Give Me That Old Time Religion” arr. H. S. Livingston  
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Portions of this service adapted from UCC.org Worship Ways and Life in Liturgy.

*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, 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>





## 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! ALL-CHURCH POTLUCK FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

Join us following worship as we officially welcome Pastor Chris, his wife Akeera, and their children Daveyion, Shanel, and Carter to our Holy Covenant UCC community of faith and to Charlotte, NC! Plan to stay and get to know our new pastor and his family!

### **UNION COUNTY PRIDE, SEPTEMBER 17, 2023**

Holy Covenant is supporting the Union County Pride festival in Sept 17. We will have a tent at the festival from noon to 6 pm. If you would like to be part of the on-site group hosting our tent, please email Suzanne at [suzlam@yahoo.com](mailto:suzlam@yahoo.com). Belk Tonawanda Park, 217 IB Shive Drive, Monroe, NC. The Interfaith Service is at 11am.

### **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](mailto:docmilam@hotmail.com).

### **YOUR OFFERING, YOUR WAY**

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/](https://HolyCovenantUCC.org/give-2/). Look for the *Give Today* button. Questions can be directed to the church office, [office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org) or 704-599-9810.



## PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

### Members

Ed Vickery & Eric Miner, in the death of Ed's mother, Kathryn Vickery  
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 Yonkovic), Sue Parrish (Terry Raley-Dennis),  
Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), Susan Rayfield (Martha Bomely), Suzie & John  
Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovic), Barbara Rutelonis (Eric Miner),  
Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Christopher Sizemore (Tina Ettesen), Eulene  
Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), 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](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org).

### OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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