



Picture by Dana Luig (Unsplash)

“My disabled body is beautiful in its distinctiveness.
My body might be more crooked than yours,
but it has earned its spiky edges.
My leg might be blue from lack of circulation,
but it sparkles like sapphires.
My nerves are on fire, but it is fire
that releases the sequoia cones that germinate the forest.
My spasms are sharp as ice,
but ice is what regulates the ocean's tide.
My disabled body is made of the same stuff as stars.”

– Amy Kenny,
*My Body Is Not a Prayer Request:
Disability Justice in the Church*

* Call to the Heart

Jana Harrison

All those easily able and willing please take a comfortable posture that supports your worship...

One: Accessible, inclusive, multi-sensory God, in celebration of You and Your Creation today, we give thanks for all.

Many: **We give thanks for people of all experiences, disabilities, and abilities.**

One: God, you invite us to learn more, to connect more, to offer helpful accommodations; so people of all abilities and disabilities, minds and bodies, can thrive.

Many: **God, all minds and bodies echo Your reflection.**

One: God, You are accessible to all. Opening our awareness to You on this Access Sunday, together may Your Creation be joyful and reflective. There is work to celebrate and work to continue in making Your world fully accessible.

Many: **Amen.**

* Hymn 459

“Come, O Fount of Every Blessing”

NETTLETON

**Come, O Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's unfailing love.**

**Here I pause in my sojourning; giving thanks for having come,
Come to trust at every turning, God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
Came to rescue me from danger, blessed body, precious blood.**

**O to grace how great a debtor daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it, wander from the love I've known:
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for your very own.**

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Jana Harrison

Please join me in this responsive prayer of transformation and new life...

Holy God, we confess that we have not always been inclusive, even though we try to be. That when we have observed difference, we have failed to marvel at the way that each person we meet is created-in-your-image. We admit that we have much to learn when it comes to loving our neighbor as we love you and as we love ourselves. We are even skirting around the use of the word disability as we say this prayer, because as we move toward full inclusion it requires us to unlearn biases, including which words we should* use, and this is uncomfortable work, God. Help us to value one another's humanity over our own discomfort over and over again. Amen.

** Disabled is preferred by the disabilities community over euphemisms that center ability such as "differently abled" or "handicapped." This varies from person to person because no disability is a monolith, but in general it is a best practice to use "disabled."*

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

God is with us in every unlearning. God is guiding us through every slip of the tongue, every oops, I shouldn't use that term, in every moment when we catch ourselves in the middle of an outdated way of being, and the Holy Spirit gently nudges us toward the loving Kin-dom that Christ calls us to co-create here on earth. May the Spirit of grace-in-the-awkwardness continue to forgive and bless our journey to full inclusion of all of God's beloveds. Amen!

Response to God's Grace

GOODNESS IS STRONGER

**Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.**

Victory is ours; victory is ours through God who loves us. (2x)

Song of Preparation

"Now"

R. Cooney

**Now is the moment, now is the time.
This very day there is salvation.**

A Litany on Bodies: Divine, Human, Blessed

Reader 1: God, you know the blessings and burdens of bodies. Your embodiment is beyond human, yet knows what it is to be human. You sat beneath a tree with Abraham and Sarah. You burned as a bush, and covered mountains as a cloud. You walked in the silence before Elijah. You appeared as wheels and creatures to Ezekiel. And when you chose to be human, you cried and nursed as an infant. You walked in the wilderness and the cities. Your feet were covered in dust and grime, and were washed, as you washed the feet of your friends. You reached out to those in need with gentle hands, callused from carpentry. You grew hungry, and thirsty, and weary. You died in a body, and rose in a body, and the proof of your life were the wounds in your flesh and the breaking of the bread that is you.

Reader 2: We praise you and your many bodies, O God. And we know that you have blessed our bodies, and all bodies. Bodies that are black, brown, white, and all races; bodies that are trans, nonbinary, male, female, and all genders and gender expressions; bodies that visibly disabled, invisibly disabled, neurodivergent, Mad, nondisabled, of all abilities and disabilities, all modes of thinking and knowing and feeling; bodies that are queer, gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, aromantic, polyamorous, of all sexualities and relationship orientations; bodies that are fat, thin, curvy, muscled, large, and small, all sizes and shapes. No body is strange to you, who have been a pillar of flame. All bodies are beautiful to you, who made humanity in your image and called us good. All bodies are cared for by you, who provided meat and manna in the wilderness, feasts from loaves and fishes, and splendid clothes even for the lilies.

Reader 1: Bless our bodies,

Many: for through them we know you.

Reader 2: Bless our bodies,

Many: for in them we do your work.

Reader 1: Bless our bodies,

Many: for with them we experience suffering, and need your care.

Reader 2: Bless our bodies,

Many: for with them we experience joy, and praise your many holy names.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

CHEREPONI

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,

Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.

Christian Lesson

James 3:13-17 (NLT)

Cheryl Milam

Our Christian Lesson for today comes from the Epistle of James 3:13-17, where the author shares true wisdom comes from God...

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.

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

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

Hebrew Lesson

Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20 (CEB)

Jana Harrison

Our Hebrew Lesson for today comes from the Book of Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20, where Moses is given the ten commandments by God...

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You must have no other gods before me. Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.

Do not use the Lord your God's name as if it were of no significance; the Lord won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way. Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks,

Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the Lord your God is giving you. Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely against your neighbor. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor. When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the horn, and the mountain smoking, the people shook with fear and stood at a distance. They said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we'll listen. But don't let God speak to us, or we'll die." Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid, because God has come only to test you and to make sure you are always in awe of God so that you don't sin."

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.

Invitation to Generosity

Jana Harrison

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

With God's love, there are no competitions, no shortcomings, no deficits, and no shortages. In God's house, there is an abundance of love and grace that endures forever. There is a full and meaningful life for each of us. And because of that, we rejoice in our hearts as we now share our tithes and our offerings, recognizing that never-ending source of love and grace that extends to each of us.

Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)*Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for all we will receive...*

Holy one, You are the source of all that we are and all that we have. While You are more desired than gold, and sweeter than honey, we bring You these gifts that may be used to revive souls and meet the needs of those in this faith community and in the wider world. Bless these gifts and this community of faith that we may be instruments of Your peace and ambassadors of Your love so that all those we meet may know that You are accessible to them and present for them. Amen.

* Doxology

BARUCH HASHEM ADONAI (Israel)

Baruch hashem Adonai. Baruch hashem Adonai.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Baruch hashem Adonai.

* Hymn 172

“Jesus Calls Us, o’er the Tumult”

GALILEE

Jesus calls us, o’er the tumult of our life’s wild, restless sea;

Day by day that voice still calls us, saying, “Christian, follow me.”

As of old, Saint Andrew heard it by the Galilean lake,

Turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for Jesus’ sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship of the treasures we adore,

From each idol that would keep us, saying, “Christian, love me more.”

In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,

Jesus calls, in cares and pleasures, “Christian, love me more than these.”

Jesus calls us! By your mercies, Savior, may we hear your call,

Give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response
Halle, halle, hallelujah! (3x) Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

HALLE, HALLE

Postlude "Come, O Fount of Every Blessing" arr. R. Wetzler
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Portions of this service have been adapted by United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries, Stephanie Niemela, Kim Williams, Gayle McGlaufflin, and Bekah Maren Anderson.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, 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 Bold & Beautiful Covenant Group for providing today's refreshments following worship. Covenant Groups are a way for you to stay connected with people in your area, neighborhood or zip code. Contact Ed Vickery, ed.vickery@att.net, if you'd like to be a part of any of our Covenant Groups: Daytime Saints; EastSiders; Southside; Bold & Beautiful; Plaza Midwood; Mountain Island, and Unstructured.

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/>

STEWARDSHIP 2024

In the month of October, the Budget and Finance Team will develop our church spending plan for the coming year that feeds our many ministries. Help us in that planning by letting us know what you intend to contribute to the church. Please share with us your plan by sending your pledge as soon as possible through one of the three options below and our Budget & Finance Team will provide weekly updates between now and October 29 as to our pace and goal. Thank you for your prayers for God's continued transformational work through Holy Covenant, for our new Settled Pastor Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, and for God's spirit to move within each of our lives as we discern what gifts each of us can offer to God to strengthen God's ministry through Holy Covenant to our members, our community, and beyond. Our pledge goals are **\$140,000.00 General Fund** (operating fund), and **\$40,000.00 Building Fund** (capital fund)!

Submit your pledge by one of the following methods:

1. Online through the church's website
<https://holycovenantucc.org/make-your-pledge-online/>,
2. E-mail your pledge to the church office at office@holycovenantucc.org or
3. Mail the pledge card to:
Holy Covenant UCC, PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

Because of you our church changes lives.

LITURGIST TRAINING, OCTOBER 22 at 12:30PM

They were on regular duty to serve God according to their assignment.

(1 Chronicles 23:31 MSG)

Whether it's regular, occasional, sporadic, or special event, claim yourself some worship leadership time and serve God, get to know the congregation and newcomers better, and feel the joy! **Greeters and ushers are needed** starting at 10:30 every Sunday, and a liturgist and a scripture reader are needed during each service. Please sign up in the Gathering Room or at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>.

Save Sunday, Oct. 22, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m., to explore what serving as a liturgist/reader would be like. Attending the training does not commit you to

serve; it just means you're thinking about it. RSVP about the training to Kristin Andes at kjandes@aol.com.

CROP WALK, OCTOBER 22 at 1:30PM

Join the cause to fight hunger and poverty locally and globally! American Legion Memorial Stadium, Sunday, October 22. Registration starts at 1:30pm. The walk is 6k (about 4 miles), but if you need to rest there is plenty of seating available. If interested in joining the walk, please connect with Tina Dickens-taichitina@gmail.com.

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2023/team/holy-covenant-ucc-4>

NEW MEMBER/INQUIRER CLASS, OCTOBER 29 at 12:30PM

Are you interested in learning more about our denomination, Holy Covenant UCC, and the United Church of Christ? Do you wonder why we do what we do? Let's get together and talk about! Please RSVP, church office, 704-599-9810 or office@holycovenantucc.org. All are welcome!

NEIGHBORS IN NEED SPECIAL OFFERING, OCTOBER 2023

This year's Neighbors In Need (NIN) collection will be shared- one-third of support to benefit the [Council for American Indian Ministry \(CAIM\)](#). Two-thirds are used by [Justice and Witness Ministries](#) to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations as well as supporting a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. We will accept this offering on October 1, 2023, as part of World Communion Sunday, and throughout the month of October. We thank you for your support and generosity!

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

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

Friends & Family Members

Karen & Billy (Kim Tyler), Melissa Brown, David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Darin Jellison and family (Jo Ann Jellison), 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), 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.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, M. Div., MBA, Senior Pastor

RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167

Jon Weddell, M.Div, MSW, Minister of Music

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