



Unsplash Photo by Colin Lloyd

“In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist,
we must be anti-racist”
— Angela Davis

“We have a right to protest for what is right.
That’s all we can do. There are people hurting,
there are people suffering, so we have an obligation,
a mandate, to do something.”
— Rep. John Lewis

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 21, 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 "Jesus Is Here Right Now" L. Roberts

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Poem "On the Pulse of Morning" Reggie Harris
by Maya Angelou

One: History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, and if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

Many: **Lift up your eyes upon the day breaking for you. Give birth again to the dream.**

One: Women, children, men, take it into the palms of your hands. Mold it into the shape of your most private need. Sculpt it into the image of your most public self. Lift up your hearts.

Many: **Each new hour holds new chances for new beginnings. Do not be wedded forever to fear, yoked eternally to brutishness.**

One: The horizon leans forward, offering you space to place new steps of change. Here, on the pulse of this fine day, you may have the courage to look up and out upon me, the rock, the river, the tree, your country.

Many: **No less to Midas than the mendicant. No less to you now than the mastodon then.**

One: Here on the pulse of this new day you may have the grace to look up and out and into your sister's eyes

Many: **Into your brother's face. Your country. And say simply**

One: Very simply, with hope...

Many: **Good morning.**

Introit

“Come by Here”

DESMOND

Come by here, my Lord, come by here. (3x)
Oh Lord, come by here.

Someone needs You, Lord, come by here...

Someone's prayin', Lord, ...

Kum Ba Yah, my Lord, ...

We need justice, Lord, come by here.
We need mercy, Lord, come by here.
We need peace and love, come by here.
Oh Lord, come by here.

* Call to the Heart

Ed Vickery

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

One: Now is the time! Here comes God's kin-dom!

Many: **To lay down the hatred and fear in our hearts.**

One: Now is the time! Here comes God's kin-dom!

Many: **To respond in learning and love.**

One: Now is the time! Here comes God's kin-dom!

Many: **To seek equity and acceptance.**

One: Now is the time! Here comes God's kin-dom!

Many: **To build a more just and equitable world.**

One: At that very moment Jesus called them.

Many: **And now we leave behind the comforts we cling to, we cast aside the safety our nets, and we journey into the great unknown, to worship and follow.**

Invocation

Ed Vickery

O God commit us during this time of worship to the sacred act of listening. Listening to the lived experiences of other people whose lives are different than our own. Hearing their pain and the fury of their anger when spoken. Listening to the measure of every word and the songs sung in hope and freedom. May we be transformed through our discomfort for the sake of love, liberation, and neighbor. Amen.

* Hymn 172

“Jesus Call 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.

Daily Affirmation

Ourselves: “In every person I strive to see the beauty of God’s image.”

Neighbor: “In every person you strive to see the beauty of God’s image.”

World: “In every person we strive to see the beauty of God’s image.”

Stories for All People

Reggie Harris

“Freedom in Vanilla and Chocolate”

Prayers of the People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Gospel Reading

Mark 1:14-20 (CEB)

Pam Shimberg

Our Gospel scripture for today comes from Mark 1:14-20, where Jesus announces the good news of God’s coming kingdom and the disciples are called to follow him...

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God’s good news, saying, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!” As Jesus passed alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” Right away, they left their nets and followed him. After going a little farther, he saw James and John, Zebedee’s sons, in their boat repairing the fishing nets. At that very moment he called them. They followed him, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired workers.

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

Ed Vickery

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

As we prepare our gifts today, we remain mindful that we cannot accept or acquiesce in the face of racial injustice. Our actions or inactions matter. What we say or don't say makes a difference. The lives of God's people are at stake. In the spirit of building a more equitable kin-dom, let us now share our gifts with God. Gifts that will sustain this church, its ministries of justice, and the work of keeping this as a sacred place where all are free to be as God made them to be.

Song during Offering

“O Lord, I'm Waiting on You”

Reggie Harris

Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

God of justice, use what was shared this day to strengthen the commitment of the church, and its people, to dismantle racism in all its forms. To put to an end to the evils of white supremacy and the foundations of white privilege it stands on. May these gifts grant us the grace, courage, and wisdom to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and live in Holy boldness. Amen.

Poem

“Fury & Faith” Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons
by Amanda Gorman

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2021/11/amanda-gorman-poem-call-us-what-we-carry>

You will be told this is not a problem,
Not *your* problem.
You will be told now is not the time
For change to begin,
Told that we cannot win.

But the point of protest isn't winning;
It's holding fast to the promise of freedom,
Even when fast victory is not promised.

Meaning, we cannot stand up to police
If we cannot cease policing our imagination,
Convincing our communities that this won't work,
When the work hasn't even begun,
That this can wait,
When we've already waited out a thousand suns.
By now, we understand
That white supremacy

& the despair it demands
Are as destructive as any disease.

So when you're told that your rage is reactionary,
Remind yourself that rage is our right.
It teaches us it is time to fight.
In the face of injustice,
Not only is anger natural, but necessary,
Because it helps carry us to our destination.

Our goal is never revenge, just restoration.
Not dominance, just dignity.
Not fear, just freedom.
Just justice.

Whether we prevail is not determined
By all the challenges that are present,
But by all the change that is possible.

& though we are unstoppable,
If we ever feel we might fail,
If we be fatigued & frail,
When our fire can no longer be fueled by fury,
We will always be fortified by this faith,
Found in the anthem, the vow:

Black lives matter,
No matter what.
Black lives are worth living,
Worth defending,
Worth every struggle.
We owe it to the fallen to fight,
But we owe it to ourselves to never stay kneeling
When the day calls us to stand.

Together, we envision a land that is liberated, not lawless.
We create a future that is free, not flawless.
Again & again, over & over,
We will stride up every mountainside,
Magnanimous & modest.
We will be protected & served
By a force that is honored & honest.
This is more than protest
It's a promise.

* Hymn

“On Solid Ground”

Reggie Harris

Chorus:

**We will not rest till the storm is over
We will not lay this burden down
We will keep each other strong
We will love and carry-on
Till we stand all together on solid ground.**

Verse *It's been a long hard journey on a winding road
So many have gone before us and they carried a heavy load
But they went singin' as they made their way
Now we follow their footsteps as we work today.*

Verse *I know that you're weary ... we all feel the pain
Sometimes the actions of the world will try your soul again
But I believe that a better day is comin' our way
That's why we're raising our voices as we work today.*

Verse *All around there is hatred... all around us there's fear
Violence touches our lives and the message is clear
We mourn our martyrs... in our hearts they stay
As we sing “We Shall Overcome” and go on our way!*

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* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

NEW DIMENSIONS

**God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey now and ever,
Now and ever, now and evermore.**

Postlude

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

The liturgy for today's service was written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.
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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.

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/>

WELCOME GUEST REGGIE HARRIS, SONGS OF HOPE AND FREEDOM

We wish to welcome special guest Reggie Harris. Mr. Harris led our music workshop on Saturday, "Songs of Hope and Freedom." An expert on the music of the Underground Railroad and the modern Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Harris is a teaching artist in an education program for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and a Woodrow Wilson scholar. Among his many awards are the Spirit of Folk Award and the W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Award. You can read more about Mr. Harris on his website: <https://reggieharrismusic.com/>. We are grateful for his time with us this weekend!

CONFRONTING WHITENESS UPDATES

Coming soon--Cohort 3 of Confronting Whiteness.

We're planning for our next group to start in early March (specific date TBA), with the 9 weekly classes held by Zoom on Sunday afternoon/evenings. 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." For further information or to add your name to a list of participants, contact Meg Houlihan (megmhoulihan@gmail.com).

Confronting Whiteness discussion/debrief for Cohorts 1 and 2

Please join us on Sunday, Feb. 11 from 12:30-2 in the Conference Room for a conversation about your experience with this process and this material. Facilitated by Sally Duffy and Meg Houlihan, we will have a chance to share our experiences and identify needs and opportunities going forward. RSVP to Meg Houlihan (megmhoulihan@gmail.com).

Brought to you by the Racial Justice and Equity (RJE) Committee of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

Christine Andersen, Mel Andersen, Kevin Edwards-Knight,
D Evans, Brian Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison, Shakti Subramanian,
Laurence Winston

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>



FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS NEEDED

Please sign up in the gathering room. We will need light refreshments after worship on Sundays, plus set up and clean up.

FOR OUR CHILDREN

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.

MASKS WELCOMED

With respiratory virus season is upon us, and increasing levels of COVID, flu (influenza), RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), as well as colds and strep, please feel free to wear a mask to avoid exposure to colds and other respiratory viruses. Stay healthy and cozy this winter!

NEW MEMBER / INQUIRER CLASSES FEB. 4 & FEB. 18, 2024

Are you interested in learning more about our denomination, the United Church of Christ? Do you wonder why we do what we do? Would you like to get together with others who will be talking about it? Let’s get together and talk about! Please RSVP the church office, 704-599-9810 or office@holycovenantuc.org. All are welcome!

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Lisa Cloninger & Kathleen Smith in the death of Lisa's father, Dennis Cloninger
Linda Carver, Linda Clark, 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

Larry Campbell and family in the recent death of his wife, Pat (Ed Vickery)
Gwendolyn Washington and family, in the recent death of her husband, Clifton
Washington Jr. (Deborah Winston)
Mary (Bill & Kim Tyler), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Henry
Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), Judah L.
Jones & Bill Englebreth, Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Roxanne &
Moose Meyer (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis),
Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Michelle Sharp (Beth &
Ed Sharp), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), 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.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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