



Unsplash Photo by David Beale

“Worship is more than singing.  
It’s more than just lyrics to a song.  
Worship is standing in the presence of God  
and declaring praise for all God’s done.”

~ Anonymous

"The only thing better than singing is more singing"

~ Ella Fitzgerald

"And all meet in singing, which braids together the different knowings into a wide and subtle music, the music of living."

~ Alison Croggon

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

**December 31, 2023, 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                                      “Carol Medley”                                      Bill Englebreth, Judah L. Jones

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 129                                      “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”                                      IN DULCI JUBILO

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;**

**Now you know of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!**

**God has opened heaven’s door, and you are blessed forevermore.**

**Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!**

\* Call to the Heart                                      Mel Andersen

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

One: Praise God in the heavens! Praise God among us! Praise the Holy One!

Many: Praise God who vindicates us! Praise God who sustains us!

One: Praise God from the depths! Praise God in all circumstances!

Many: Praise the Creator who made us! Praise God who shapes us!

One: Let all praise the name of the Holy One!

Many: The glory of God reigns in heaven and on earth! Praise the Holy One!

\* Hymn 132

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth its praises bring;  
Let every heart prepare Christ room,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
The glories of God’s righteousness  
And wonders of God’s love, and wonders of God’s love  
And wonders, wonders of God’s love

Modern Testimony

Sally McLester

“When we sing, we do something unique. For - never mind the song - there is no voice which sounds like ours. It is part of our imaging in the likeness of God. As God is unique, so are we; as God’s voice is singular, so is each of ours...

When we speak alone or together, there is nothing peculiarly startling about it. But when we sing, and enliven the text through music, and enter into that music not just with our mouth and ears, but with our whole being, then we are doing something which is both personal and holistic.

And if this utterance of song is offered to someone else, then we be sure that it is a unique gift which no one else could offer. For no one else has our voice, and the song will last only for as long as we sing it. Then it is gone, and no one else will hear that particular rendering...

One of the purposes of singing in church, especially by a choir or soloist, is to enable that transforming experience to happen...the chances are that never again will every one of these people be in exactly the same place singing these particular hymns and songs. At the next service of worship some will be missing, others will be new and the likelihood is that the liturgy will require a different selection of texts for singing.

So, if we can but sense it, every time a congregation sings, it is offering a one-time-only gift to its Maker. It is important that every song sung is offered to God with that sense of uniqueness. God is worth it!” - *John L. Bell*

Song

TEMPLE OF PEACE

Love grows in a weary world  
When hungry hearts find bread and children's dreams are fed.  
Love grows in a weary world: the promised feast of plenty comes!

Daily Affirmation

**Ourselves:** “I welcome praise easily and joyfully into my life.”  
**Neighbor:** “You welcome praise easily and joyfully into your life.”  
**World:** “We welcome praise easily and joyfully into our life.”

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Handbell Choir

“Away in a Manger”

M. & S. Eithun

*Joy Decker, Sally McLester, Dawn Robinson, Dawn Simmons*

Prayers of the People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

EMMANUEL

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, your name is called Emmanuel.  
God with us, revealed in us, your name is called Emmanuel.

First Lesson

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 (CEB)

Christine Andersen

*Our first scripture lesson for today comes from Isaiah 61:10-62:3, where the prophet shares joyful proclamations of God's doing...*

I surely rejoice in the Lord; my heart is joyful because of my God, because he has clothed me with clothes of victory, wrapped me in a robe of righteousness like a bridegroom in a priestly crown, and like a bride adorned in jewelry. As the earth puts out its growth, and as a garden grows its seeds, so the Lord God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

For Zion's sake I won't keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still until her righteousness shines out like a light, and her salvation blazes like a torch. Nations will see your righteousness, all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the Lord's own mouth will determine. You will be a splendid garland in the Lord's hand, a royal turban in the palm of God's hand.

A Reflection on Praise

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Special Music

“No Wind at the Window”  
*Laura Hankins*

J. L. Bell

## Second Lesson

## Psalm 148 (CEB)

*Our second scripture lesson for today comes from Psalm 148, where the psalmist gives praise to God for all of creation...*

Praise the Lord from heaven!

Praise God on the heights!

Praise God, all of you who are his messengers!

Praise God, all of you who comprise his heavenly forces!

Sun and moon, praise God!

All of you bright stars, praise God!

You highest heaven, praise God!

Do the same, you waters that are above the sky!

Let all of these praise the Lord's name

because God gave the command and they were created!

God set them in place always and forever.

God made a law that will not be broken.

Praise the Lord from the earth,

you sea monsters and all you ocean depths!

Do the same, fire and hail, snow and smoke,

stormy wind that does what God says!

Do the same, you mountains, every single hill,

fruit trees, and every single cedar!

Do the same, you animals—wild or tame—

you creatures that creep along and you birds that fly!

Do the same, you kings of the earth and every single person,

you princes and every single ruler on earth!

Do the same, you young men—young women too!—

you who are old together with you who are young!

Let all of these praise the Lord's name

because only God's name is high over all.

Only God's majesty is over earth and heaven.

God raised the strength of his people,

the praise of all his faithful ones—

that's the Israelites, the people who are close to him.

Praise the Lord!

A Reflection on Praise

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song

"We Shall Not Be Moved"

Bill Englebreth, Judah L. Jones

Third Lesson

Colossians 3:12-17 (CEB)

Mel Andersen

*Our third scripture lesson for today comes from Colossians 3:12-17, where an immediate follower of Paul shares the kind of life that is reflected in following Christ...*

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.

A Reflection on Praise

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Special Music

"The Manger Is Stranger"  
Meg Houlihan

A. Udis Kessler

#### Fourth Lesson

Luke 2:21-40 (CEB)

*Our fourth scripture lesson for today comes from Luke 2:21-40, where Jesus' parents bring him to the temple and Simeon and Anna respond in praise...*

When eight days had passed, Jesus' parents circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived. When the time came for their ritual cleansing, in accordance with the Law from Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (It's written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord.") They offered a sacrifice in keeping with what's stated in the Law of the Lord, *A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*

A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus' parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said, "Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation. You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles and a glory for your people Israel."

His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old. After she married, she lived with her husband for seven years. She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. She approached at that very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Mary and Joseph had completed everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown, Nazareth in Galilee. The child grew up and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

A Reflection on Praise

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Special Music

“Joseph’s Song”  
*Ed Vickery*

M. Card

Invitation to Generosity

Mel Andersen

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

This morning we pause to give God thanks and praise. As we reflect on the year that has passed, through its ups and downs, we celebrate the blessings we have been given. We name them as they come to our minds...each one a gift from God, a present of the holy’s presence, and a faithful reminder of the spiritual wealth we hold of a loving God who is always in our midst. As an act of worship let us now offer something of tangible value in return, demonstrating our gratitude for God’s gifts.

Music during Offering

“Adoramus”  
*Bill Englebreth, Judah L. Jones*

TAIZE

\* Doxology

W ńłobie leńy

**Glory be to the Creator, glory be to the Christ,  
Glory be to the Spirit, our praise to you arise.  
Here we offer to you gladly all the gifts that you impart,  
As we glory in your presence, giving from a grateful heart.**

\* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Mel Andersen

*Let us join together in a unison prayer of dedication for all the gifts we have received...*

**God of goodness, God whose gifts sprawl across the earth...take what has been shared this day and use it to reignite the labor of love that beats in our hearts. Use that love to channel these gifts into mercy, forgiveness for the ways we’ve fallen short. Make them vessels of compassion, to hold people in a new light. Transform them into blessings, evidence of your sure presence. In praise for these gifts, we pray, saying, “Amen.”**



## GO TELL IT

**Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere.  
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!**

**While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.**

**The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. (R)**

**Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. (R)**

### \* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

### \* Benediction Response

# WONDERFUL CHILD

Jesus, Jesus, oh, what a wonderful child.  
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek, and mild;  
New life, new hope the child will bring.  
Listen to the angels sing,  
“Glory, glory, glory,” let the heavens ring!

## Postlude

## “Hark the Herald”

T. Wilhelmi

*Songs in this service are used by permission.  
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*Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki and adapted from Worship Ways.*

**WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:**

D Evans, Brian Hankins, 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-users>



## 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/>

### 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!

### HOPEFUL SPIRITS GROUP MEETS WEEKLY

As part of our community outreach ministries, we welcome the Hopeful Spirits, a newly formed Community AA meeting began meeting Tuesday, December 26, 2023. This group will meet each week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 pm-7:30pm in the Conference Room. If you, or someone you know, is a “friend of Bill W” or a person who believes they may have a problem with alcohol, pass it on! This meeting is all inclusive for anyone in the community. Thank you for your support.

### SECOND ANNUAL NEW YEARS EVE GAME NIGHT TONIGHT!

Come and join us on New Year's Eve at church from 6:30 pm until 9-ish for all kinds of games and jocularities. Bring your favorite games and goodies!!

**The church office will be closed January 1, 2024 in observance of the holiday. Happy, healthy, peaceful, love filled New Year to all!**

### 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? Please contact the church office, [office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org), if you are interested in attending.

## **SONGS OF HOPE AND FREEDOM, WEEKEND OF JANUARY 20-21**

Special Musical Event: Songs of Hope and Freedom with Reggie Harris, an interactive music workshop from **9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024.**

Join us to enrich our worship and fellowship with this special musical event. No singing or musical ability required! An expert on the music of the Underground Railroad and the modern Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Harris will teach us songs that together, we can make a part of our regular worship service. Among his many awards are the Spirit of Folk Award and the W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Award. He is also a teaching artist in an education program for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and a Woodrow Wilson scholar. **Mr. Harris will also join us for worship on Sunday, Jan. 21.** We are publicizing this event widely so we encourage Holy Covenant members to register ASAP! See the weekly newsletter for more information, or email Holly Middleton at [hsmiddleton@gmail.com](mailto:hsmiddleton@gmail.com). This event is sponsored by your Racial Justice and Equity Committee. Thank you!

### **Please Remember in Prayer Members**

Linda Carver, 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, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), 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), Clifton Jr. & Gwendolyn Washington (Deborah Winston), 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**

**Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor**

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