



Unsplash Photo by Austin Park

“Despair and isolation are my greatest internal enemies. I need to remember I am not alone, even when it feels that way. Now more than every it is time to put my solitary ways behind me, even while protecting my solitude.”
– Audre Lorde

“When you’re in trouble don’t depend on yourself. Don’t depend on people. Depend on God.”
– Yasmin Mogahed

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT ~ WELCOME SUNDAY**

February 25, 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 "Lonesome Valley" arr. E. Butler

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 "Salaam" M. Samir (Egypt)

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God to every race.

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God in every place.

* Call to the Heart Jim Dwiggins

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

One: We look around and are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; Persecuted, but not forsaken; Cast down, but not destroyed; Oppressed, but not hopeless.

Many: **African-American History tells the story of a people whose faith in God, hope in the future, and love for one another sustained them through every generation.**

One: As you, God, gave them the strength to fight and resist, give us the power to break the chains of mass incarceration, inequality, violence, and the sins of racism.

Many: **Give us the charisma of Stokely Carmichael, the influence of Bell Hooks, the poetic heart of Audre Lorde, the genius of Percy Julian, and the soul-stirring vocal power of Aretha Franklin.**

One: As we gather for worship, we remember the sacrifices, faith, and resilience of the many courageous African-Americans we read and learn about throughout Black History.

Many: **Today, we hold these beautiful souls in our memories, so our feet are guided, our minds focused, and our hearts sustained as we strive to serve this present age in unity, community, and common good. Amen.**

Invocation (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

Holy Spirit, during this month we've remembered you don't pass over people but are all around us. You are the inspiration that moves us to dreams, the passion that takes us to the streets, and the advocate that continues to move the soul of this world toward equality and justice. Spirit of love and compassion, wherever we gather, may we know we are not alone, but you are right in our midst. Amen.

* Hymn "Somebody's Knocking at Your Door" SOMEBODY'S KNOCKIN'

Somebody's knocking at your door. (2x)

O sinner, why don't you answer? Somebody's knocking at your door.

Knocks like Jesus, Somebody's knocking at your door. (2x)

O sinner, why don't you answer? Somebody's knocking at your door.

RECEPTION AND WELCOME OF NEW MEMBERS

Join us in welcoming our new members!

Patti Unger & Diane Catanzaro

Dave & Pam Shimberg

Kat Kerce

Jay & Cathy Whitley

Patrick Washburn

* Congregation: We welcome each of you and celebrate your journey of faith. We promise to search with you for truth in Scripture, word and witness; to walk with you in life's joys and sorrows; to support you when life is shaken; to laugh with you when life lifts your spirit; to share silence, song and sacrament; and to grow in Christian love and mutual appreciation. We will rely on God's sustaining presence as we journey forward together.

Greeting of Christian Love

Sponsors: On behalf of the entire congregation, it is our pleasure to welcome you as full members of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, we extend to you the hand of Christian love and welcome.

Poem

*“Dark Testament Verse 8”
Deborah Winston*

by Pauli Murray

*Hope is a crushed stalk
Between clenched fingers
Hope is a bird’s wing
Broken by a stone.
Hope is a word in a tuneless ditty –
A word whispered with the wind,
A dream of forty acres and a mule,
A cabin of one’s own and a moment to rest,
A name and place for one’s children
And children’s children at last . . .
Hope is a song in a weary throat.
Give me a song of hope
And a world where I can sing it.
Give me a song of faith
And a people to believe in it.
Give me a song of kindness
And a country where I can live it.
Give me a song of hope and love
And a brown girl’s heart to hear it.*

Anthem

“Wade in the Water”

arr. D. Moore

Our Hebrew Lesson for today comes from Psalm 107:1-31, where the psalmist gives thanks for deliverance from troubles...

“Give thanks to the Lord because he is good,
because his faithful love lasts forever!”

That’s what those who are redeemed by the Lord say,
the ones God redeemed from the power of their enemies,
the ones God gathered from various countries,
from east and west, north and south.

Some of the redeemed had wandered into the desert, into the wasteland.

They couldn’t find their way to a city or town.

They were hungry and thirsty;
their lives were slipping away.

So they cried out to the Lord in their distress,
and God delivered them from their desperate circumstances.

God led them straight to human habitation.

Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love
and his wondrous works for all people,
because God satisfied the one who was parched with thirst,
and he filled up the hungry with good things!

Some of the redeemed had been sitting in darkness and deep gloom;
they were prisoners suffering in chains
because they had disobeyed God’s instructions
and rejected the Most High’s plans.

So God humbled them with hard work.

They stumbled, and there was no one to help them.

So they cried out to the Lord in their distress,
and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

God brought them out from the darkness and deep gloom;
he shattered their chains.

Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love
and his wondrous works for all people,
because God has shattered bronze doors
and split iron bars in two!

Some of the redeemed were fools because of their sinful ways.

They suffered because of their wickedness.

They had absolutely no appetite for food;
they had arrived at death’s gates.

So they cried out to the Lord in their distress,
and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

God gave the order and healed them;
he rescued them from their pit.
Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love
and his wondrous works for all people.
Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices
and declare what God has done in songs of joy!
Some of the redeemed had gone out on the ocean in ships,
making their living on the high seas.
They saw what the Lord had made;
they saw his wondrous works in the depths of the sea.
God spoke and stirred up a storm
that brought the waves up high.
The waves went as high as the sky;
they crashed down to the depths.
The sailors' courage melted at this terrible situation.
They staggered and stumbled around like they were drunk.
None of their skill was of any help.
So they cried out to the Lord in their distress,
and God brought them out safe from their desperate circumstances.
God quieted the storm to a whisper;
the sea's waves were hushed.
So they rejoiced because the waves had calmed down;
then God led them to the harbor they were hoping for.
Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love
and his wondrous works for all people.

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.**

The Good News

“You Are Not on Your Own”
Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Jim Dwiggins

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

Generosity has been a key part of African culture for centuries. From communal living to traditional forms of giving, African societies have always recognized the importance of generosity and its impact on individuals, families, and communities. Gift giving in African cultures is sign of relationship and meant to be an expression of love, respect, and appreciation. As we now share our gifts may we do so as a sign of our relationship with God.

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord.

Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Jim Dwigins

Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...
God of love and justice, use these gifts to foster unity and solidarity among us. To know in our efforts toward creating a more just world we are not alone, but collectively part of a diverse community that strives to follow Jesus in transforming hearts and minds. May these gifts, shared in generosity, be a sign of our relationship to the humanity of others, and the ministries which are called to serve them. Amen.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Benediction Response “We Will Walk with God” SIZOHAMBA NAYE (Swaziland)

We will walk with God, my brothers; we will walk with God.

We will walk with God, my sisters; we will walk with God.

We will go rejoicing till the kindom has come.

We will go rejoicing till the kindom has come.

Postlude

“Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child”
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arr. J. Carter

Parts of the liturgy for today’s service were written and adapted by Intercultural Ministries Central, UCC Worship Ways, Bidemi Adedire, Pauli Murray, Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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, 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>



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/>

Sojourners Class, Sundays at 9:45am

The Sojourners will begin a book study of *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for our Own* by Eddie S. Gaude, Jr. We hope that you will join us, and preparation is not essential. We gather Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09> Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

Crafter's circle meets Mondays at 1:30pm

Bring a craft, learn a craft. Join us in the Gathering Room. All are welcome.

Moral March, Saturday, March 2nd

On Saturday March 2nd at 10:00am the Poor People's Campaign will gather for their moral march on Raleigh. After another year of devastating legislative attacks on poor people and low-wage workers by the NC General Assembly, it's time for North Carolinians from across the state to take back the mic from the extremists and tell our elected leaders that we refuse to do anything but go Forward Together, Not One Step Back. The people of North Carolina are suffering:

- Over 40% of the state are poor or low-income: over 4 million residents.
- Over 1 million North Carolinians still lack health insurance.
- Nearly 2 million North Carolinians earn less than a minimum living wage of \$15/hour, 37% of the workforce.
- Average household debt rose 6% in 2022 to an average of \$56,590 in North Carolina.

That's why we're calling for a Mass Poor People's and Low Wage Workers' State House Assembly and Moral March on Raleigh and to the Polls on March 2, 2024! To RSVP for the march: <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/action/save-the-date-saturday-march-2-2024/>

Ministry Team Fair, March 3

Don't miss the Ministry Teams Fair! On Sunday, March 3 after worship there will be tables set up in the Gathering Room and each table will feature one of our Ministry Teams. There will be team reps providing information about what the different teams do and various ways that you can participate. This is a great opportunity to connect with other church members and to make a difference in the Charlotte community. Rumor has it there will be snacks and swag!

Confronting Whiteness discussion/debrief for Cohorts 1 and 2, March 10

Please join us following worship from 12:30-2pm in the Conference Room. We will continue our conversation about your experience with this process and this material.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Linda Carver, Kevin Decker, Kevin & Jeff Edwards-Knight, 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

Mary (Bill & Kim Tyler), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Deby Gumper (Dawn Simmons), 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), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), 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.