



*Unsplash Photo by Imad Alassiry*

“When you love people, you see all the good in them, all the Christ in them.  
God sees Christ...in us and loves us.  
And so, we should see Christ in others, and nothing else, and love them.  
There can never be enough of it.  
There can never be enough thinking about it.”

– Dorothy Day

“True encounter with Christ liberates something within us,  
a power we did not know we had, a capacity to grow and change.”

– Thomas Merton

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

March 17, 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 "O Love How Deep" arr. M. Dorian

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 "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" LONESOME VALLEY

**Jesus walked this lonesome valley. He had to walk it by himself.**

**Oh, nobody else could walk it for him. He had to walk it by himself.**

\* Call to the Heart Ed Vickery

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

One: I want to see Jesus...

Many: **In my neighbor, in the stranger, and those labeled outsider.**

One: I want to see Jesus...

Many: **In those who are trans, non-binary, and LGBTQ.**

One: I want to see Jesus...

Many: **In the eyes of children, the touch of the ageing, and teens rebelling.**

One: I want to see Jesus...

Many: **In different cultures, other countries, and diverse people.**

One: I want to see Jesus...

Many: **May he appear before us as we worship, in the light of new wisdom, in the truth of greater understanding, and in love of God's people. Amen.**

\* Invocation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

Divine Spirit, who is the source and presence behind all things, we open our hearts during this time. We lay down our uncertainties and worries, and free ourselves to hear your still small voice speak to us. Amid our worship may this voice carry the sound of spiritual guidance, words we need to hear, and the tender nudges of inspiration we name as, “precious, cherished, and dear.” Amen.

\* Hymn

“Open My Eyes, That I May See”

OPEN MY EYES

Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth you have for me.  
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.  
Silently now I wait for you, ready, my God, your will to do.  
Open my eyes; illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth you send so clear.  
And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear.  
Silently now I wait for you, ready, my God, your will to do.  
Open my ears; illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere.  
Open my heart, and let me prepare love with your children thus to share.  
Silently now I wait for you, ready, my God, your will to do.  
Open my heart; illumine me, Spirit divine!

Daily Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Yourself: “I let go of the old me and welcome the new one rising.”

Neighbor: “You let go the old you and welcome the new one rising.”

World: “We let go the old us and welcome the new one rising.”

Prayer of Transformation & New Life (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

God of love, we confess that our ego can all too often get in the way of our ability to serve you and others with our lives. That our false self can be driven by our own strength and a lack of trust in you to provide for our every need. Help us to let go and be formed anew by your love into our true self. Forgive us for our false ways, transform us, and raise us again to new life. Amen.

Song

“God, Be Merciful to Me”

REDHEAD 76

God be merciful to me; on your grace I rest my plea.  
My transgressions I confess; grief and guilt my soul oppress.  
Wash me, make me pure within; cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

Gracious God, my heart renew, make my spirit right and true.  
Do not cast me from your sight nor remove your Spirit’s light.  
Your salvation’s joy restore, make me steadfast evermore.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Friends, Jesus reminds us he is with us. He tells us that if a single grain of wheat can fall to the earth and die and bear much fruit, then letting go of that which no longer serves us or our highest good can result in an abundance of blessings. As we gather the courage to lay aside the desires of the ego, we make room for God to move into our lives and work for all that is good, holy, and true. Amen.

Song

“Nothing Can Trouble”

NADA TE TURBE

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.  
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.  
God alone fills us.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

SOJOURNER

I want Jesus to walk with me. (2x)  
All along my pilgrim journey,  
Oh I want Jesus to walk with me.

Prayers of the People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Lord’s Prayer (*unison*)

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.



\* Gospel Lesson

John 12:20-33 (CEB)

Pam Shimberg

*Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from John 12:20-33, where two Greeks come to see Jesus and he speaks of his death...*

Some Greeks were among those who had come up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request: “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The time has come for the Human One to be glorified. I assure you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it can only be a single seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their lives will lose them, and those who hate their lives in this world will keep them forever. Whoever serves me must follow me. Wherever I am, there my servant will also be. My Father will honor whoever serves me.

“Now *I am deeply troubled*. What should I say? ‘Father, save me from this time?’ No, for this is the reason I have come to this time. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard and said, “It’s thunder.” Others said, “An angel spoke to him.”

Jesus replied, “This voice wasn’t for my benefit but for yours. Now is the time for judgment of this world. Now this world’s ruler will be thrown out. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me.” (He said this to show how he was going to die.)

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

“I Want to See Jesus” Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

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

As yeast rises to create bread, so does the rising of our gifts multiply the love of God in the life of the world. As we give of our treasure, whatever it may be, however large or small, it contributes to the whole. May we trust God will use it for the work of the Jesus in others who appear before us and the building of the kin-dom of God that is emerging among us. Let us now share our gifts with God...

\* Doxology

GIVE THANKS

Give thanks with a grateful heart; give thanks to the Holy One;  
Give thanks because God's given Jesus Christ, God's Son. (2x)

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"  
Let the poor say, "I am rich  
Because of what the Lord has done for us." (2x) Give thanks.

\* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

*Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...*  
Gracious God, may each of these gifts be the diverse body of Christ as seen through the many ministries of this church: the eyes which see the disinherited and lowly, the hands which heal the sick and ailing, the ears which hear the oppressed and deserted, and the feet which continue to march tirelessly for peace and justice. May every gift find its way to give life to the world. Amen.

\* Hymn

"Open Our Eyes"

B. Cull

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

Poem

"I Want to See Jesus" by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

I want to see Jesus.  
I've heard all this one could do.  
It intrigues me.  
How an encounter could change people.

We hear of lepers healed.  
Demons cast out.  
Sinners welcomed to tables.  
Outcasts being part of inner circles.

We hear hunger being fed.  
Sickness being mended.  
Miracles not merely tricks.  
But wonders defied and liberative.

This age-old story.  
Not past, but present.  
Now among us.  
Meant to be experienced.

I want to see Jesus.  
More than you know.  
This one's peace, justice,  
Their love for all God's people.

Maybe this one did appear.  
But I didn't quite notice.  
Caught up in expectation.  
Of age, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

So, I keep my eyes open.  
Watching, looking, where will I see you.  
Anticipating the transformation,  
I should hope to go through.

There you are.  
Not far but ever so near.  
In faces and eyes.  
Hearts and minds.

I want to see Jesus.  
So, speak to me.  
Heal me. Love me. Forgive me.  
And may your presence  
Never cease to escape me.

**\* 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

**"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"**  
*Songs in this service are used by permission.*

arr. J. Vogt



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*Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written and adapted by UCC  
Worship Ways and 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:**

Shakti Subramaniam, Laurence Winston, Deborah Winston, Kathy Habel  
D Evans, Brian Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

We welcome all in our congregation to participate! **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/>

### 2024 UCC Creation Care Art Contest

Calling all kids! Join the UCC Vote for Climate Hope Art Contest. Children and Youth under age 18 are invited to draw, paint, or color about the world and the environment in which they want to live. The winners will have their art printed on thousands of voter pledge cards to be collected by UCC members and sent to Congress. See JoAnn Jellison for a worksheet, due in by April 16th. We'd love to have your artistic interpretation!

<https://www.ucc.org/vote-for-climate-hope-campaign/>

### Charlotte's 2024 AIDS Walk, May 18

Questions? Please let Debbie Davis know at [Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com](mailto:Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com).

[AIDS WALK Charlotte 2024 - Holy Covenant United Church of Christ \(onecause.com\)](https://www.onecause.com)

Holy Week at Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

Palm Sunday, March 24, 10:55am

Maundy Thursday, March 28, 7:00pm

Easter, March 31, 10:55am

Come early & bring fresh flowers for the cross.

The Christian Ed team is planning an Egg Hunt after Easter worship. We have plenty of eggs but would appreciate a love offering for treats purchased. See the display in the gathering room. We are also planning ahead for child care, and wish to know your plans for attending Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter.

[Office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:Office@holycovenantucc.org)

## **Sojourners Class, Sundays at 9:45am**

We gather Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom

## **Crafter's circle meets Mondays at 1:30pm**

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

### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

#### **Members**

Mel Andersen, 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**

Nancy Roha and family in the unexpected death of her daughter, Connie (Kathleen Wagner)

Melissa Brown, Gregg Clare (Kathleen Wagner), 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 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**

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

**RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167**

**Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music**

**Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant**

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