



Unsplash Photo by James Lee

Psalm 133
The Blessedness of Unity
A Song of Ascents.

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life for evermore.

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTERTIDE

April 7, 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 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" arr. R.W. Thygerson

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Terry Raley-Dennis

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Introit 73 "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" ENTER, REJOICE

Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.

Today will be a joyful day: enter, rejoice, and come in.

* Call to the Heart Jim Dwiggin

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

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: **But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."**

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: **But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."**

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: **Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.**

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: **Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!**

* Invocation (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

Resurrected Christ, you have taught us how the unbelievable can be possible. When there is so much to fear in the world, we can find peace in your presence. As we worship, breathe your Spirit on us, that we may carry it with us. Help us comfort our neighbors. Help us serve a world of need. We pray this with thanksgiving for your work among us. Amen.

* Hymn 72

“Here, O God, Your Servants Gather”

TOKYO

Here, O God, your servants gather, hand we link in hand;
Looking toward our Savior’s cross, joined in love we stand.
As we seek the realm of God, we unite to pray:
Jesus, Savior, guide our steps, for you are the Way.

Many are the tongues we speak, scattered are the lands,
Yet our hearts are one in God, one in love’s demands.
In despair our hope appears, calling age and youth:
Jesus, Teacher, dwell with us, for you are the Truth.

Nature’s secrets open wide, changes never cease;
Where, O where, can weary souls find the source of peace?
Unto all those sore distressed, torn by endless strife:
Jesus, Healer, bring your balm, for you are the Life.

Grant, O God, an age renewed, show us how love thrives,
Help us as we work and pray, send us for our lives
Truth and courage, faith and power needed in our strife:
Jesus, Leader, be our Way, be our Truth, our Life.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

God, we confess that we too might be like Thomas. As we are overwhelmed by the world’s grief, it’s natural for us to be cynical. It’s hard to believe that hope is possible when hope is hard to find. But when we stop believing in hope, we also stop believing liberation can be possible. When we stop working to tear down injustice and discrimination, we stop others from experiencing the peace we have found in you. Forgive our unbelief, calm our fears, and help us be instruments of your peace. Amen.

Song

“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”

DETROIT

“Forgive our sins as we forgive,” you taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

Words of Grace

Rev. Glencie Rhedrick

One: Beloved, Jesus comes to us with grace, telling us we can believe. Because we believe, we can also be empowered to do the work of justice. Yes, the world is heavy. No, the work will never be done. But because we know Christ's peace, we can share it with others.

Many: We believe in the grace and peace of Christ. We are forgiven.
Alleluia!

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)

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Glencie Rhedrick

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.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

O CHRIST, SURROUND ME

**God be the love to search and keep me;
God, be the prayer to move my voice;
God, be the strength to now uphold me:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.**

**Christ in the eyes of all who see me,
Christ in the ears that hear my voice,
Christ in the hearts of all who know me:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.**

* Gospel Lesson

John 20:19-31

Pam Shimberg

Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from John 20, as Jesus appears to the Disciples.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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.

New Testament Lesson

Acts 4:32-35

Jim Dwiggins

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

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

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

The Good News

Rev. Glencie Rhedrick

Invitation to Generosity

Jim Dwiggins

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

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low. Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

* Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

Please join me in a unison prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

**SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE**

Song of Preparation

"Jesus Is Here Right Now"

JESUS IS HERE

Jesus is here right now. Jesus is here.

With this bread and wine true peace you'll find;

Christ Jesus is here right now.

Invitation

Rev. Terry Parrish

One: The Holy One be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

Many: We open our hearts to you, O God.

One: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:
Let us join together in the UCC Statement of Faith:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death. You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

Words of Institution

Rev. Terry Parrish

As Jesus was at the table with his friends, he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And after supper, he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Pour out your Spirit on these gifts and make this bread and this cup sustenance for our journey. By your grace, may we experience anew the call you place on our lives to serve one another. In feasting at your table, may our hearts be filled with courage once again to follow the Risen Christ, come what may.

Sharing of Bread and Cup

Hymn 337 during Communion

UNION SEMINARY

“Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether”

**Draw us in the Spirit’s tether, for when humbly in your name
Two or three are met together, you are in the midst of them;
Alleluia! Alleluia! Touch we now your garment’s hem.**

**As disciples used to gather in the name of Christ to sup,
Then with thanks to God the Giver, break the bread and bless the cup,
Alleluia! Alleluia! So now bind our friendship up.**

**All our meals and all our living make as sacraments of you,
That by caring, helping, giving, we may be disciples true.
Alleluia! Alleluia! We may serve with faith anew.**

Prayer of Dedication

Rev. Terry Parrish

* Hymn 256

"We Live by Faith and Not by Sight"

DUNLAP’S CREEK

**We live by faith and not by sight;
No gracious words we hear,
From Christ who spoke as none e’er spoke,
Who still we know is near.**

**We may not touch Christ’s hand and side,
Nor follow where Christ trod;
But in confessing we rejoice:
Our Savior and our God!**

**Help then, O Christ, our unbelief:
And may our faith a bound
To call on you when you are near
And seek where you are found:**

**That, when our life of faith is done,
In realms of clearer light
We may behold you as you are,
With full and endless sight.**

* Benediction Rev. Glencie Rhedrick
Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace! Receive the Holy Spirit deep in your being, and share your new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

Postlude “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You” arr. T. Birchwood

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Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written and adapted by UCC Worship Ways, by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. Communion liturgy adapted by Rev. Cheri Dennis.

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, Anne Hayes, Jo Ann Jellison,
Dave Shimberg, Pam Shimberg, 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-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/>

WELCOME BACK REV. GLENCIE RHEDRICK

Today, we welcome the Reverend Glencie Rhedrick, to the pulpit. She is an ordained Baptist minister, currently serving as an associate minister at First Baptist Church-West. A graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, Glencie received her M.Div from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University and is currently a PhD student attending California Institute of Integral of Studies. Glencie currently serves as Chaplain for several organizations, is a local and national community activist and organizer, and was the former president of Mecklenburg Ministries. She is also an active member of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. Currently she holds the lead positions with numerous activist and outreach organizations. She is the convenor of a Facebook live show, 'SpeakingintheKeyofWE.' a conversation concerning Black Male Privilege and Patriarchy in the Church, raising the awareness of the biases women of African Ascent encounter in the Church and other segments of society. We are grateful for her time with us today!

SOJOURNERS CLASS RESUMES NEXT SUNDAY AT 9:45AM

CRAFTER'S CIRCLE MEETS MONDAYS AT 1:30PM

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

SANDWICH BUILD, APRIL 14

Following worship on Sunday, April 14, we will make 400 sandwiches to be delivered to A Roof Above the next Monday. All are welcomed, and no experience is necessary!

WNCA SPRING EDUCATIONAL EVENT, APRIL 20

Part of the WNCA W.I.S.E. Commitment, all are invited to **Taking Action to Conquer Stress**, 9:45 AM - Noon, Zoom event. Details on wnca-soc.org

EARTH SUNDAY IS APRIL 21

The Creation Justice team is planning an appropriate worship service and some creative indoor and/or outdoor activities. Thank you to all the kids who submitted

entries to the UCC art contest. The winner will be announced in May. Meanwhile, all our young artists are winners in our eyes!

CHARLOTTE'S 2024 AIDS WALK, MAY 18

Questions? Contact Debbie Davis Debbiekdavisnc@gmail.com, donate at p2p.onecause.com/aidswalkclt/team/holy-covenant-united-church-of-christ

BELLS OF LAKE NORMAN CONCERT AT HCUCC, MAY 18, 4PM

All are welcomed for a community handbell concert "Musical Escapades" Secular pieces by the Beatles and ABBA; non-secular pieces such as "By the Lakeside". We hope you will join us!

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

Melissa Brown, Phillip Cherry (Anne Pigg), Gregg Clare (Kathleen Wagner), Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Deby Gumper (Dawn Simmons), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), the Jeffreys family (Kathleen Wagner), Darin Jellison (Jo Ann Jellison), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Suzie & John Robinson (Dana Endsley & Mike Yonkovig), John Schiel (Dawn Simmons), 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.

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

Mailing address: PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810