



*Artwork by Sally Young*

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer

“How can we love our neighbors well if we remain silent in the face of circumstances that threaten their livelihoods and poison their bodies? How can we tell our brothers and sisters in Christ, ‘I believe you,’ when they describe the ways that climate is harming them and their families, and then do nothing to try to change the circumstances? How can we love our neighbors without fighting for their right to clean air and water, and a safe place where they can flourish and thrive?”

- Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**CREATION CARE SUNDAY**

**April 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 “Terra Beata” arr. M. Hayes

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Land Acknowledgement Dawn Schmitz & Holly Middleton

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eFTe2BvRFnLksPvNM4JZHl3hzWht0bGHe\\_mApld--cA/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eFTe2BvRFnLksPvNM4JZHl3hzWht0bGHe_mApld--cA/edit)

– *We gratefully acknowledge the work of Dr. Andrea Pitts and Dr. Melinda Maynor Lowrey, whose words have been adapted and included in this statement.*

**Acknowledgement of People and Land**

We acknowledge that Holy Covenant is on colonized land traditionally belonging to the Catawba, Cheraw, Sugeree, Wateree, and Waxhaw Peoples, all of whom have stewarded this land throughout the generations. The city in which we are located, Charlotte, was established on the traditional crossroads of two Indigenous trading paths, the Occaneechi Path and the Lower Cherokee Traders’ Path, routes that facilitated the extensive trade networks of many Indigenous peoples prior to colonization.

We would also like to recognize today the many enslaved and indentured peoples who were forced to dedicate their labor and bodies to the construction of what is now Mecklenburg County. To these peoples and their descendants, we acknowledge the grave injustices inflicted on them, and we recognize the indelible mark of their labor on the land on which we gather today.

In recognizing that we are on colonized Indigenous land that has also been crafted through forced labor, we take it as our collective responsibility to confront the histories and present-day patterns of oppression in this place while affirming and lifting up the many Indigenous forms of resurgence.

Today, the city of Charlotte has a Native community that includes members of all of North Carolina’s eight state and federally recognized tribes. The Metrolina Native



\* Hymn 21

“God Reigns o’er All the Earth”

TERRA BEATA

God reigns o’er all the earth! Green hills and valleys low,  
The farms and towns in golds and browns  
God’s grace and beauty show.

God reigns o’er all the earth! Stone banks and spreading plains,  
In rainbow hues - reds, yellows, blues - of streams and country lanes.

God reigns o’er human life! Through youth and aging years,  
In death, in birth, in grief, in mirth, in all our hopes and fears.

God reigns o’er human life! Our inspiration still.

Through all our schemes, in all our dreams,

We see God’s reigning will.

God reigns o’er time and space! In history’s by-gone days,

Christ’s faithful folk in reverence spoke to bring God earnest praise.

God reigns o’er time and space! O’er galaxy and sun,

Through timeless years the cosmos hears the heavenly music run.

Reflection “Papa, the Conservationist...Know Better Show Better”

from Precious Memories - Short Stories of Humor and Inspiration

*by Jay Whitley*

*Reading by Cathy Whitley*

Hymn 569 “Touch the Earth Lightly” TENDERNESS

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,

Nourish the life of the world in our care:

Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,

Trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,

agents of death for all creatures that live,

We who would foster clouds of disaster—

God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,

Water that blesses, and air that is sweet.

Health in God’s garden, hope in God’s children,

Regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,

God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,

Teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,

Using us gently, and making us one.

Reflection

“The North Carolina Wren”

Benjamin Rudolph

Reading

“An Earth Prayer”

by Harriet Koflak

*Inspired by the Briri, Indigenous Costa Ricans*  
*Kristin Andes*

Long ago  
The ancients say  
This land was free  
And we shared it all  
With the mountains and the sea  
The birds and the trees  
We lived in peace  
Long ago  
Before those others came  
And built fences  
By cutting the trees  
Dug mines  
By cutting the earth  
Removed her blood  
The oil that lies within  
Formed long ago  
Like us  
Who lived in peace

The birds sang less  
Without the trees  
The land become dry  
Without the birds  
To plant the flowers  
And we too became quiet  
Watching our mountains die  
Listening for the birds  
That no longer flew  
But still we lived in peace

What sustained us  
Through all those years?  
The nights of silence  
And the songs of the frogs

For we know  
As the ancients said  
This land will again be free  
And we will again share it all  
With the mountains and the sea  
The birds and trees  
For we still live in peace  
And we wish you the same  
For we are all one

Reflection

“Water Justice”

Dr. Sally Duffy

Litany for the Earth (*Responsive*)

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: Let us pray together for the goodness of the earth: for the mountains and plains, for the rocky and fertile soil, for the health of the ground that covers the earth...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer.**

One: For the waters that abound on the earth, for the health of our streams and lakes and rivers and seas and oceans, for their health and well-being and their cleanliness...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer.**

One: For the air that we breathe and that sustains life throughout the globe, for its health and an end to its pollution...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer.**

One: For the plants that live on the ground and in the waters, that they may enjoy health and may continue to cycle clean and fresh air for the renewal of the world...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer.**

One: For animals near and far, for their flourishing and their ability to adapt to the pressures placed on them by humanity...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer.**

One: For the planet as a whole: the earth, waters, air, plants, and animals, for the ability of humanity to see the ways the planet has been damaged by our use of the natural resources entrusted to us by God, for an end to abuse of the planet and the beginning of a time of healing...

**Many: Lord, hear our prayer**

One: God of All Life, we give thanks for the Earth, our common home, and ask forgiveness for all the unreasonable demands we have made on it. As our Earth, its people and ecosystems struggle to survive, help us to change our ways and guide us to live a life which is centered not on ourselves, but on all you have created. For this we ask in Jesus' name.

**Many: 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.

Hebrew Reading

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

Cathy Whitley

*Our Hebrew reading for today comes from Psalm 23, where the psalmist speaks of God's profound goodness and restoration...*

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup> **The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures;  
The Lord leads me beside still waters;**

<sup>3</sup> The Lord restores my soul.

The Lord leads me in right paths  
for its name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> **Even though I walk through the darkest valley,**  
I fear no evil,

for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.

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

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

Reflection

“What’s Your Other Place”

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

A Call to Action

“Becoming a Creation Justice Church”

Kim Buch

Invitation to Generosity

Terry Parrish

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

One: Today we give thanks for the beauty and diversity of God's creation. As we prepare our offerings and tithes this day, you are encouraged to also take time to write on the yellow leaves a way in which you will begin practicing environmental justice in your own life. After worship you can place the leaf on the posterboard we have in the gathering room to create multiple sunflowers, each displaying the ways we will be caring for the earth. Let us now share our gifts with God...

\* 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*)

Terry Parrish

**Many: Generous God, you have blessed us with the resources to share the good news of your love for all creation. We dedicate these gifts and pray that they may bring healing, wholeness, and hope to the world, so that future generations may also know your graciousness and love in it. Amen.**



I love you world.  
Love your seven different faces.  
Love your healing waters  
wide and deep.  
Love the thing you have  
with the sun and moon  
and what it teaches us  
about companionship,  
about change,  
about revolution.

Love the mirror at your navel,  
how it shows off your hemispheres,  
illustrating important lessons  
about balance,  
about reflection,  
about centering ourselves.

Love how much like little worlds  
we are. How our earthquake  
is your shiver, your sneeze a tsunami,  
an avalanche, a mudslide.

When you have hot flashes  
we call it drought.  
You once covered your whole body  
with ice to cool a fever.

When you weep, daily,  
over our continued ignorance,  
our epic failures and petty squabbles  
—our every transgression,  
your waters  
break and we are born again.

Love your outreach, our mutual attraction,  
your gravitational pull.

For every treasure we steal  
from your womb  
you send us hail and thunderstorms.  
When we invent poisons and no antidotes  
and build monuments to ourselves  
you send tornadoes and hurricanes  
to remind us of how small we truly are.

And yet, every day you continue to humble,  
inspire, and move us to tears  
with your natural beauty.

Our own efforts to mimic your vistas  
are what we dare call art and dance,  
music and poetry,  
architecture and language,  
and love.  
It is the only thing we have ever gotten right.

We can't pass the course on humanity  
if we keep failing the lessons  
on harmony  
and until we unlearn fear and hate.

Thank you, world, for this  
open-book exam before us,  
for still believing  
we are worthy of your love

We who love you black already know  
that everything we do to you  
we also do to ourselves.

\* Hymn 433

"In the Bulb There Is a Flower"

PROMISE

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;  
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;  
There's a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.  
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;  
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.  
In our death, a resurrection; at the last a victory,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

\* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

\* Benediction Response

HALLE, HALLE

Halle, halle, hallelujah! (3x) Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Postlude

"Terra Beata"

arr. G. McCoy

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*Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written and adapted by the U.N. Environmental Sabbath Service on Earth Day 1990, The New Zealand Prayer Book, Earth Prayers by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer, Sr. Marlene Kelly GSIC (Citizens for Public Justice), Web of Creation Earth Day Resources.*

*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

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

### Members

Tommy Tomlinson and Alix Felsing in the death of Tommy's brother-in-law, Ed Williams; Linda Carver, 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, Anita Taylor

### Friends & Family Members

Melissa Brown, Phillip Cherry (Anne Pigg), Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Gregg Clare (Kathleen Wagner), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty & Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), John Schiel (Dawn Simmons), Tom Schneller (Barb Schneller), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Mark Williams (Debbie Davis), 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).

## 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

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09>

### CRAFTER'S CIRCLE MEETS MONDAYS AT 1:30PM

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

## **FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS NEEDED**

Please sign up in the gathering room for light refreshments after worship on Sundays, plus set-up and clean-up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-sunday1#/>

**GREETERS AND USHERS ARE NEEDED** starting at 10:30am every Sunday. Liturgists and readers roles are also available.

Please sign up in the Gathering Room or at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>

## **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](http://onecause.com))

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

All are welcomed for a community handbell concert "Musical Escapades"

Secular pieces "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" and "Cracked Crystal"; non-secular pieces such as "By the Lakeside". We hope you can join us!

### **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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