



Photo by Valiant Made

“Friendship is the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others.”

- C.S. Lewis

“Friends are God’s way of taking care of us.”

- Anonymous

“A true friend is not someone we have chosen for ourselves, but rather someone God has placed in our lives for a purpose.”

- Anonymous

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 5, 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 “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” arr. J. Vogt

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 “There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place” arr. M. A. Miller

There’s a spirit of love in this place. (2x)

You can’t see it, but it’s there, just as precious as the air.

There’s a spirit of love in this place.

There’s the presence of peace in this room. (2x)

In God’s tenderness is found peace that passes human bounds.

There’s the presence of peace in this room.

* Call to the Heart Cheryl Milam

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

One: Friends, we are called to love one another, because love is from God.

Many: **God’s love is poured in us and dwells within us.**

One: We are called to extend God’s love to all people.

Many: **Strangers, friends, outcasts, insiders, enemies, and allies.**

One: We are called to proclaim God’s love in all that we say and do.

Many: **In our thoughts, may God’s love be our own. In our words, may God’s love be made known. In our actions, may God’s love be shown. Amen.**

* Invocation (*unison*)

Cheryl Milam

Join me as we call our attention to the Spirit of God moving among and within us in this space...

Loving God, we have come near and far, to be reconnected to you and your presence. As we worship may we be filled with the awareness that you are more than some mere divine entity, but a presence that crosses thresholds and barriers to be our constant companion, our collaborator in hope, and our dearest friend to all that is good, holy, and true.

* Hymn 506

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

CONVERSE

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptation? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to our God in prayer!

Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to our God in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, burdened with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to our God in prayer!

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to our God in prayer!

Jesus' arms will take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Cheryl Milam

God, our friend, we confess that we do not always love one another. So often our divisions and disagreements get in the way and prevent us from knowing the joy of meaningful relationships. Even as we seek to follow Jesus and his commandment to love, we falter and stumble. Help us renew our focus and see others through the eyes of your love. Amen.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Friends, today we remember that we didn't choose God, but God chose us. God chose us as friends and companions. And in this friendship with God we are forgiven for our mistakes, we are free to be our whole selves, and while we may have missed the mark at times, we are strengthened through this eternal bond to try once again in sharing God's unconditional love with everyone. For this mercy and grace, we have been given, we give thanks, saying, "Amen."

Response to God's Grace

OH QUE BUENO (Puerto Rico)

Oh, how good is Christ the Lord! On the cross he died for me.

He has pardoned all my sin. Glory be to Jesus.

Glory be to Jesus! Glory be to Jesus!

In three days, he rose again. Glory be to Jesus!

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Pastoral Prayer

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.

Song of Response

MAYENZIWE (South Africa)

Mayenziwe 'ntando yakho. (5x)

(Xhosa translation: *Your will be done*)

Contemporary Reading

Ed Vickery

Our contemporary reading for today comes from Henri Nouwen's book Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life. In his book he says...

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."

* Gospel Reading John 15:9-17 (Inclusive Language Bible) Tina Dickens
Our Gospel reading for today comes from John 15:9-17, where Jesus speaks of the sacrificial and self-giving love that marks close friendship with him...

As my Abba has loved me, so have I loved you. Live on in my love. And you will live on in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I live on in Abba God's love and have kept God's commandments. I tell you all this that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. And you are my friends, if you do what I command you. I no longer speak of you as subordinates, because a subordinate doesn't know a superior's business. Instead I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from Abba God. It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that whatever you ask of Abba God in my name God will give you. This command I give you: that you love on another.

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 "To Be a Friend of Jesus" Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity Cheryl Milam

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

Jesus has appointed us to bear fruit that will last. Fruit that will bring love and justice. Fruit that will bring joy and hope. Bring what you can; for what we gather together, will be the gifts we offer to God and in turn to transform lives.

* 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 Dedication (*unison*) Cheryl Milam

Please join me in our unison prayer of dedication...

Loving God, one of Christ's most important commandments is loving one another. With these gifts, help us show this love as we welcome all, care for the vulnerable, seek justice, and hold to the continuing hope in all we do that never shall death or despair have the last word. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE

Invitation

One: God is with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: **We lift them up to God.**

One: Let us give thanks to the Holy One, our God.

Many: **It is good and beautiful to give God our praise.**

One: God of love, we thank you, for you have embodied your love and your delight in us.

Many: **Your Creation is a gift of love.**

One: In Christ, you have shown us what love should look like.

Many: **Your Christ is a gift of love.**

One: In love you set us free from all that oppresses and choose us to join you in working for justice, so that all your Beloved may know the fullness of life.

Many: **Your love has conquered the world.**

One: You call us to this meal, to feast on your love and to share in your joy. Therefore, with all Creation we praise you singing...

**Holy, holy, holy One, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

LAND OF REST

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed are all who come in your name, and blessed is Jesus, your Christ, who embodied your love. He fed the hungry, healed the broken, and gathered the outcast. In Christ you befriended us, that his joy may be ours. He laid down his life for his people, a gift of love; but you raised him from the dead, showing us that even love conquers death.

Words of Institution

Sharing of Bread and Cup

“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 Thanksgiving and Dedication (*unison*) Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Gracious God, we thank you for this mystery in which you have given yourself
to us. Send us out, filled and changed by your love, to serve others for the
sake of the healing of the world, in the name and the Spirit of Christ. Amen.

* Hymn 393 “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” DENNIS
Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The sharing of a common life is like to that above.

Before our God we come and pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

We share each other’s woes, each other’s burdens bear,
And often for each other flows a sympathizing tear.

When we are called to part it gives us inward pain,
But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response “Song of Hope” ARGENTINA
May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
Working for a world that’s new, faithful when we hear Christ’s call.

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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*Parts of the liturgy for today’s service were adapted by UCC Worship Ways,
Steve Garnaas-Holmes, 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:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian, Laurence Winston

Greeters: Kathy Habel, Barb Schneller

Media: Robert Shepherd, Keith Dennis

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, Kevin & Jeff Edwards-Knight, Linn Finger, Tom &
Kathy Habel, Jim Humphrey, Kat Kerce, 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

Family and Friends of Mark Williams

Melissa Brown, Phillip Cherry (Anne Pigg), Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Gregg
Clare (Kathleen Wagner), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), the
Jeffreys family (Kathleen Wagner), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave
Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty
& Simone McKinnon (Joy Decker), Joe Parks (Beth Sharp), Tom Schneller (Barb
Schneller), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery), Janet
Wakefield (Linda Burby), Nelly Webb and parents (Kristin Andes), John Zastrow
(Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
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/>

MISSIONS AND JUSTICE INVITES YOU...

David Cox Elementary is our neighborhood school and we would like to celebrate **teacher appreciation week** with them. Please join us on **today after worship** to fill up special breakfast bags for 60 teachers!

SPECIAL EVENT! We are partnering with [ImaginOn](#) to host a **literacy story time, book giveaway, and pizza dinner** at the Archdale Manor Apartments on **Monday, May 13 at 4 pm**. This site is where so many of our asylum-seeking families reside and this event gives families the opportunity to discover the resources available at the public library. We need help with set up as well as sharing the enjoyment of watching kids interact with great story tellers! Please contact Suzanne Lamorey if you wish to participate suzlam@yahoo.com.

CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES

Do you know someone who will be graduating soon? Please let us know so we can recognize their accomplishments out ahead! office@holycovenantucc.org

THE MICHAEL G. BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP

Michael Brooks Scholarship applications are ready for distribution. Contact Dawn in the church office. There are \$2000 in funds to be awarded. High school graduates and soon to be graduates encouraged to apply. Deadline for submission is May 15, 2024. Candidates will be notified by May 31, 2024.

JRVC YOUTH SUMMER EVENTS

Johns River Valley Camp is an outdoor ministry site of Southern Conference, United Church of Christ located in Collettsville, NC. Various camp dates and events are available to youth of Grades 3-12. <https://www.jrvc.org/>

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!

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING DURING MAY

The United Church of Christ has 5 yearly special offerings. The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. HCUCC will receive the STC offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2024. Notate your donation as "STC". No need to wait! You can make your offering on the church website anytime in the month of May. Look for the Give button.

We welcome all in our congregation to participate in worship leadership, ushering, greeting, and fellowship time. Sign up in the gathering room, or download the app to make signing up even easier!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/mobileapp>

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