



“Without justice there can be no love.”
– Bell Hooks

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice”
– Bryan Stevenson

“If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you recognize that your liberation and mine are bound up together, we can walk together.”
– Lilla Watson

Founded in 1916, we are an Open & Affirming (LGBTQ+), anti-racist, and justice seeking church that is part of the greater United Church of Christ.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor
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**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

September 8, 2024, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcome here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired" C. Burrell

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 "Holy Ground" G. Davis
D Evans, vocals

**We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around.
Let us praise Jesus now. We are standing in God's presence on holy ground.**

* Call to the Heart Meg Houlihan

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worship and reading...

One: This morning as we gathering for worship, release us...

Many: from the chains of this moment, imprisoned by our past.

One: Release us...

Many: from the belief we cannot help or make a difference.

One: Release us...

Many: from our disinterest to see, speak, or care for the lowest.

One: God of Justice make us new. Breathe new life into us...

Many: as we worship, as we stand with you, and as we seek to create your beloved kin-dom here on earth for all that is generous and good.

* Hymn

“We Are Your People”

WHITFIELD

We are your people: God, by your grace,
You dare to make us Christ to our neighbors of every nation and race.

Called to portray you, help us to live
Closer than neighbors, open to strangers, able to clash and forgive.

Glad of tradition, help us to see
In all life’s changing where you are leading,
Where our best efforts should be.

Joined in community, breaking your bread,
May we discover gifts in each other, willing to lead and be led.

God, as we minister in different ways,
May all we’re doing show that you’re living,
Meeting your love with our praise.

Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Yourself: I am alive with the power of Christ, and I use it for God’s good.

Neighbor: You are alive with the power of Christ, and you use it for God’s good.

World: We are alive with the power of Christ, and we use it for God’s good.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Alix Felsing

Holy God, although we honor you with our worship, we confess our hearts are often far from you. We admittedly are quick to judge, quick to exclude, and quick to put others down instead of building them up. Forgive us, God, and help us amend our ways. Help us embrace the inclusive love you graciously offer us and expect us to offer others. Amen.

Hymn 544

“If I Have Been the Source of Pain, O God”

CAMACUA

If I have been the source of pain, O God;
If to the weak I have refused my strength;
If, in rebellion, I have strayed away; Forgive me, God.

If I’ve insisted on a peaceful life,
Far from the struggles that the gospel brings,
When you prefer to guide me to the strife, Forgive me, God.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“All things are possible for the one who has faith,” (Mark 9:23). These words by Jesus were said in the belief that things can change, new ways can be made, and that life can be different. Grace isn't seeing things change overnight; it's noticing change can be made and having the courage to initiate it. It's knowing we have the power to create new ways so that life for us and others can flourish. May we know not just what needs to change, but that we are given the grace to do it. Amen.

Response to God's Grace “Know That God Is Good”

MUNGO NI MWEMA

Know that God is good. (3x) God is good; God is good.

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Song of Preparation “In an Age of Twisted Values”

CHURCH UNITED

In an age of twisted values, we have lost the truth we need.

In sophisticated language we have justified our greed.

By our struggle for possessions, we have robbed the poor and weak.

Hear our cry and heal our nation; your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.

We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear.

Hatred swiftly turns to cruelty if we hold resentments dear.

For communities divided by the walls of class and race,

Hear our cry and heal our nation; show us, Lord, your love and grace.

Responsive Litany

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Liberating God, on this day we pause from all that's going on in our lives to anchor our hearts and minds in you. To listen for your voice and your guidance, so that we are less inclined to react and more likely to respond in love. As we pray today, we lament, cry out, and weep that:

Our country, and countries around the world, are still dealing with the effects of their racist history. Here and in places far from here, white supremacy continues to persist, and any discussion of white privilege never ceases to trigger white defensiveness. And the people ask, “How long has this been going on?”

All: For far, far too long.

The agency women have over their own bodies is once again being targeted and threatened. Anti-discrimination laws being passed are putting our LGBTQ+ loved ones at risk. Homophobia and social stigmas are not just concerns but living realities. And the people ask, “How long has this been going on?”

All: For far, far too long.

We live in the richest country in the world, yet not everyone can afford the healthcare they need. Many live with life-threatening ailments or needed treatments but can't receive care because they don't meet the right criteria or have the insurance they need. And the people ask, "How long has this been going on?"

All: For far, far too long.

War rages on between Ukraine and Russia, leaving thousands of deaths in its wake and millions more displaced. In Palestine genocide is happening, and buried deep beneath the rubble of daily bombings are those people called parents, siblings, and babies. And the people ask, "How long has this been going on?"

All: For far, far too long.

The earth aches from neglect. Pollution of our air, water, and land is happening. Greenhouse gases continue to flood the atmosphere, insulating us in an oven with no clear answer of whether we will rise to the occasion to stop the rising temperature. And the people ask, "How long has this been going on?"

All: For far, far too long.

God as we pray today move us not just to hear the cries of your people, but to liberate them from injustice. Give us the faith we lack, and the conviction to know that all things are possible. Curate within us resilience, strength, and the radical fortitude of Jesus. As his disciples, put us where we are needed and use us, God, to do his loving work of changing and transforming this world. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*) OPEN OUR EYES

**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.**

Modern Lesson

Caroline Utz

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Greg Jarrell's book, Our Trespasses: White Churches and the Taking of American Neighborhoods. In his book he says, "Repairing what can be repaired, and demolishing the rest, presents the greatest and the most daunting work for white churches who wish to enact justice, which is to say, to disavow their whiteness in the pursuit of repair. Only by breaking the silence to tell stories about ourselves, and by identifying the persistent theologies that encourage our silences, can we conjure differently and live into a future healed from the hauntings in which we live."

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

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

*Gospel Lesson

Mark 9:14-29 (NRSV)

Mel Andersen

Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from Mark 9:14-29, where Jesus casts an evil spirit out of a boy...

When Jesus, Peter, James, and John approached the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them and legal experts arguing with them. Suddenly the whole crowd caught sight of Jesus. They ran to greet him, overcome with excitement. Jesus asked them, "What are you arguing about?"

Someone from the crowd responded, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, since he has a spirit that doesn't allow him to speak. Wherever it overpowers him, it throws him into a fit. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and stiffens up. So I spoke to your disciples to see if they could throw it out, but they couldn't."

Jesus answered them, "You faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you? Bring him to me."

They brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a fit. He fell on the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been going on?"

He said, "Since he was a child. It has often thrown him into a fire or into water trying to kill him. If you can do anything, help us! Show us compassion!"

Jesus said to him, "If you can do anything? All things are possible for the one who has faith." At that the boy's father cried out, "I have faith; help my lack of faith!" Noticing that the crowd had surged together, Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again." After screaming and shaking the boy horribly, the spirit came out. The boy seemed to be dead; in fact, several people said that he had died. But Jesus took his hand, lifted him up, and he arose.

After Jesus went into a house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we throw this spirit out?"

Jesus answered, "Throwing this kind of spirit out requires prayer."

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

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

Sermon

"The Silent and the Silenced"

Rev. Greg Jarrell

Invitation to Generosity

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

We have more to offer than we recognize or realize. God has given us abundant gifts. Gifts of time, talent, and treasure that look different for all. Gifts to share and gifts that can and do make a difference. Let us faithfully respond to our generous God, by presenting our tithes and offerings through a heart of generosity.

Offering Music "Angels Watchin' Over Me" arr. M. Schubert
Patrick Washburn, Jon Weddell, piano duet

* Doxology OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

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

Giving God, how often we take for granted all that we have. How often we fail to recognize how blessed we are. Take all that was and will be shared and use it to further Christ's mission and ministry in what can be a hurting world. Use these gifts for peace. Use them for justice. And if all else fails, use them for love. Amen.

* Hymn "We've Come This Far by Faith" arr. R. Smallwood

Refrain: We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord,
Trusting in God's holy Word—God's never failed us yet.
Oh, can't turn around, we've come this far by faith.

Don't be discouraged with trouble in your life;
God will bear your burdens and remove all misery and strife. (R)

* Gratitude Holly Middleton

* 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.

Postlude "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" arr. S. Key

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*The liturgy for today's service was written or adapted Rev. Lisa Ann Moss
Degrenia, the Presbyterian Outlook, 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, Greeters: Deborah Winston, Anne Hayes

Refreshments: Racial Justice & Equity Team/Hospitality Team

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/>

Due to COVID cases within our congregation and community, those attending worship are welcomed to wear a mask should you feel more comfortable while worshipping with us.

PLEASE WELCOME AUTHOR AND GUEST PREACHER, REV. GREG JERRELL

Guest preacher Greg Jarrell is an ordained minister, author and community organizer in Charlotte. His recent book, *Our Trespasses: White Churches and the Taking of American Neighborhoods*, examines the influence of white churches and Christians in planning, executing, and profiting from the federal Urban Renewal projects of the 1950s and '60s, in Charlotte and beyond. Greg is Senior Campaign Organizer for The Redress Movement, a national nonprofit organizing local communities for housing justice. Greg is based in west Charlotte's Enderly Park neighborhood, where he has lived and worked on equitable housing issues since 2005. He co-founded QC Family Tree, a cultural organizing group in his neighborhood, and is a founding organizer of Charlotte's West Side Community Land Trust. Greg writes about theology and history and co-leads Carolina Social Music Club, a popular jazz band. He and his spouse, Helms, who is also an ordained minister, have two teenagers.

The Racial Justice and Equity Team is providing a catered lunch after worship. We will return to the sanctuary at 12:45 for Greg's presentation on *Our Trespasses*, which is Holy Covenant's Summer All-Church Read and the current focus of the Sojourners group. All are welcome to attend.

Our Trespasses will be available for purchase in the Gathering Room, and Greg will sign copies upon request.

SOJOURNERS CLASS

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

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

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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>.



YOUR OFFERING, YOUR WAY

Various methods are available for your convenience! Schedule offerings, one time or recurring, through your bank's online payment system. Many financial institutions offer free services to its customers. Mailing a check, from home or a financial institution? Please use this secure address:



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Donate online at [HolyCovenantUCC.org/give-2/](https://www.holycovenantucc.org/give-2/) via PayPal or Subsplash Wallet. Look for the *Give Today* button. Questions can be directed to the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org or 704-599-9810.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Family & Friends in the recent death of Reverend Jerry Rhyne
Christopher & Akeera Czarnecki and family in the recent death of Chris' grandmother, Domenica Haegele
Kathy Habel and family in the recent death of her husband, Tom Habel
Lee Brigman, Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Kat Kerce, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Alice Phelan & Sally Young, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Ed & Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Ed Vickery & Eric Miner, Cathy & Jay Whitley

Friends & Family Members

Melinda Tabb & Amanda Fern in the recent death of their mother, Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery)
Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Debbie Coble (Cindy Coble), Pam Culp & Pam McGill (Melissa Noll), George Miner (Eric Miner), Francesca Czarnecki (Christopher Czarnecki), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Joe Parks (Beth Sharp), Mike Santino (Melissa Noll), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), 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.